Tales from the Six Faced World
Old Dragon's Tale

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Spoiler Warning

This story has key elements inside the main story of Mushoku Tensei. **It is highly advised NOT to read this book before you finish Volume 17 as a minimum requirement**. Otherwise, you'll get strong spoilers. Also**, if you just finished Volume 17, DO NOT read** Rifujin's Blog or the MT References sections of this book. Or you'll be getting strong spoilers of the final arc. Read those only after you've finished Volume 26 of Mushoku Tensei.

You have been warned!

Web Novel Edition:
This is the web novel version of Old Dragon's Tale. As of the publication date, there is no official release of this story. There is no light novel edition, no official illustrations, not even in Japan, and we are still waiting for Redundancy Volume 3 (in Japan). Every translation you may have read in the past is a 100% fan-made translation from a time when we had no official terminology or official names for many characters.

There are two fan translations in English, both of which contain several errors or certain translation style choices that are similar between the two. As a result, there will be changes in the names and terminology and they will be different from what you may remember. Some of these changes will have footnotes to clarify these circumstances.

Edition Without Honorifics:
This is an edition made for those who feel that reading Japanese honorifics in an ancient medieval setting breaks their immersion from the story. If you like reading the Japanese honorifics and appreciate those details, then I recommend you read the version which has the Honorifics.

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Synopsis

On Dragon Roar Mountain, there, lives an ancient dragon in human form.

By the dragon's side was a girl who took care of his daily needs.

One day, the girl asked the ancient dragon, "Please, tell me about yourself."

The dragon replied, "Very well, but it will be a long story."

The girl nodded, and the dragon began to speak.

A tale from long, long ago, in the age of myths...

Author: Rifujin na Magonote

HOLY LAND THE SWORD
NERIS KINGDOM
BASHRANT DUKEDOM
BIHEIRIRU KINGDOM
HEAVEN CONTINENT
TOWN OF KURASUMA
TOWN OF RIKARIS
ISLANDS
RED DRAGON UPPLR JAW
RANOA KINGDOM
OGRE ISLAND
DONATI TERRITORY
FITTOA REGION
DRAGON GOD' S HOLE
DEMON CONTINENT
CAPITAL ARUSU
CAPITAL
ASURA KINGDON
RED DRAGON MOUNTAIN RANOE
CENTRAL CONTINENT
STRIFE ZONE
WORLD MAP
ISLANDS
WIND PORT
SHIRON KNGDOM
ISLANDS
ZANTO PORT
KIKKA KNGDOM
DENSE FOREST AREA
SANAKIA KINGDOM
FOREST
BEAST TERRITORY
HOBBIT TERRITORY
HOLY SWORD HIGHWAY
GREAT FOREST
ELF TERRITORY
DRAGON KING MOUNTAIN RANGE
MILIS CONTINENT
BEGARITT CONTINENT
DWARF TERRITORY
CAPITAL
BLUE DRAGON MOUNTAIN RANGE
CAPITAL
EAST PORT
WEST PORT
HOLY MILIS KINGDOM
DRAGON KING KINGDOM
LABYRINTH TOWN RAPAN

TALES FROM THE SIX FACED WORLD
OLD DRAGON'S TALE

First Part

Chapter 1: The Dragon and the Girl

Across the continent, there exists a mountain range that stretches over the land. At the heart of this mountain range, there was one particularly large mountain.

Its name was Dragon Roar Mountain.

Dragon Roar Mountain is the tallest mountain in the world, located deep within the mountain range. While trees cling to the rocky surface, its steep cliffs prevent people from entering. On top of that, Red Dragons inhabit the high peaks. It's not a place for people to live.

Even high-ranking adventurers sometimes visit the base of the mountain, but they never venture deep inside. However, if a powerful adventurer were to climb the mountain, they would witness an astonishing sight.

A house.

In the middle of the mountain, there is a single house. It was an unusual sight. A house where people live, in a place where no one should be. If an adventurer got closer to the house, they would be even more surprised by what they saw.

A girl.

A girl, who seemed out of place in the deep mountains, was there. A blonde girl with long ears, carrying what looked like a bucket, was waddling back and forth in front of the house.

The girl carried the bucket to the back of the house, returned inside, then came out again with the bucket, repeating this process. It seemed she was carrying water or something to the back of the house.

If you followed the girl to the back of the house, you would see that there was a large cave there. The cave had an eerie atmosphere, but the girl, unfazed, entered it and walked further in. Deeper inside, waiting, was a reptile with a huge body, a long neck, red scales, sharp fangs, and claws.

A Red Dragon.

The girl poured the contents of the bucket into a box placed near the Red Dragon. The Red Dragon showed no hostility towards the girl, merely watching her work as if to say, "Hurry up and finish."

However, the amount the girl could carry in her bucket was far too small for the size of the box. She would have to go back and forth many more times to fill it. That said, it seemed this was her last trip.

The girl placed the bucket by the box and stretched.

"Whew, water-fetching is done!"

The girl cheerfully declared this and bowed to the dragon. The dragon, too, snorted as if to say, "Well done."

The girl cheerfully returned to the house. It was a simple, wooden house, nothing particularly special about it. However, anyone with a discerning eye would notice that the house was protected by a very advanced magical barrier.

"Master, Master〜,[1] I'm done fetching the water!"

When the girl entered the house, a scene brimming with the feeling of everyday life unfolded before her. Chairs, tables, potted plants, piles of papers, and all sorts of junk whose purpose was unclear filled the room.

The girl carefully weaved her way through them. She did so because the person she called out to didn't respond. She quickly reached her destination. The innermost room of the house. It was the largest room, where the master of the house stayed.

"Master?"

The girl opened the door and stepped inside. Inside, bookshelves towering several times her height were lined up, packed closely together.

It looked just like a library.

The girl walked further into the forest of bookshelves. There are only a handful of libraries in this world, but this book-filled room was a familiar sight to her. In the middle of this space full of books, there was a man.

He had his back to the entrance, focused on writing something at his desk. His hair was a strange mix of mottled silver and green. It was an eerie hair color, but again, one the girl was used to seeing.

"Good grief, Master!"

When the girl called out, the man flinched and lifted his head. He slowly spread his wings from his back and turned around.

The man recognized the girl.

"Oh, Rostelina. You're still awake at this late hour? You have plenty of work tomorrow, you should get to bed early."

"What late hour? The sun's already up! I even finished serving water to Mister Dragon!"

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[1] The girl uses the term "Goshujinsama" (ご主人様), a term usually used by maids to refer to their "master" in Japan.

"Oh, is that so?"

The man stood up. When he did, the girl had to look up at him. After all, the man was over two meters tall.

"I see, you've finished serving him water? Good job. But, I see, a whole day has passed already."

"Master, you need to sleep properly!"

"Yeah, I know."

Even though the girl practically shouted, the man remained indifferent.

"No, you don't! You haven't slept for the past two days either!"

"...I don't need to sleep every day like you do."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, I belong to a very long-lived race. Sleeping once every few years is more than enough."

The girl looked puzzled at the man's reply. But in an instant, she puffed out her cheeks.

"I don't know anything about you, Master!"

"That's true. But you never asked, and yet you've followed me all this time."

"Please, tell me more about yourself."

"Of course, I don't mind. But my life has been long. The story might take a while."

The man squinted slightly as he said this, glancing around.

Even with his tall stature, the bookshelves around him still towered above. The shelves were packed tightly with books. Every one of them had been written by the man. They were records of his life, his history.

"I don't mind. Actually, are you sure, Master? Aren't you busy?"

"It's fine. For someone like me, who has such a long life, a second holds little to no value. I've got more than enough time to talk to you."

With that, the man gestured toward a nearby chair for the girl to sit in.

He also sat down, resting his hand thoughtfully on his chin.

"But if we're going to talk, wouldn't it be more fun to tell a different story than my own? Like the tale of a boy who journeyed alone to defeat the Demon Empress. Or the story of a hero who killed a giant monster and won the heart of a princess. Or perhaps the story of a saint, who was manipulated by an evil god, forced to fight in an unwinnable war... No, that last one wasn't exactly a fun story."

"No! I want to know more about you, Master!"

The girl interrupted him, sensing that if she didn't stop him, she'd end up hearing some other story instead.

"Ah, I see. But what exactly do you want to know about me?"

"...Everything."

"Everything?"

"Like, how you've lived your life until now, and why you do the work you do, and things like that."

"I see... But it's not a very pleasant story. There might be some interesting parts, but it all leads to a sad ending. It's a bad ending. My life is a bad ending. If you listen to it, I'm sure you'll end up feeling sad."

"I don't care!"

At the girl's firm tone, the man sighed as if giving in and removed his hand from his chin. He looked up at the ceiling. As if gazing at a version of himself from long ago.

"Alright then. If you insist, I'll tell you. But where to start? I rarely talk about my past, so I'm not sure where to begin."

"You should start from the very beginning—when you were born and first became aware of the world."

"From the very beginning, huh? Hmm... I hope I can tell it well... If you find it boring, feel free to fall asleep. If you'd rather sleep than listen to my story, don't hesitate."

"I'm not like you, Master! I wouldn't fall asleep while someone's talking!"

"Hahaha, you're a good girl, aren't you? Alright then, let's begin."

The man quietly closed his eyes.

The girl leaned forward, eager to listen.

"Let’s start before I was born—with how the world itself came to be."

The man began to speak.

He told a story from long, long ago, from the age of myths...

Chapter 2: The Birth of the Demon Dragon

Once upon a time, there was a God.

Let’s call him the Creator God.

He was old.

He had lived through eons and created countless worlds, but both his body and mind had reached their limit. He knew his death was near. As his final task, he decided to create one more world.

However, he hadn't created a world in a long time. Perhaps because of this long hiatus, or perhaps because his faculties were declining...

The world he created was terribly distorted and unbalanced. He no longer had the power to properly create a world. However, he had experience from creating many worlds before.

So, he created another world.

Just like the first one, it was also distorted. Without hesitation, he continued creating world after world.

In this way, he created six worlds.

- A world of dragons, where the heavens and earth were inverted, inhabited by a race of immense power.

- A world of demons, filled with swirling poison and miasma, inhabited by a race with strong, resilient bodies.

- A world of dense forests and mountains, inhabited by a race with sharp claws and keen senses.

- A world rich in life under the sea, inhabited by a race with gills, fins, and scales.

- A world of floating landmasses in the sky, inhabited by a race that could freely soar through the skies with their wings.

- A world of plains and grasslands, inhabited by a race with weak bodies but superior intellect.

Each of these worlds was warped. Any one of them, on its own, would collapse because they were too unbalanced.

So, the God fused the worlds together. By closely connecting the six worlds, he achieved balance. Thus, one world was created.

But the God was not satisfied with just that. The six worlds barely maintained their balance by being stuck to each other, but they required management until they stabilized and settled and stable.

The God used the last of his strength to split his own body. From his divided body, he created beings to manage the precariously balanced worlds, assigning each to a world.

And then, the God died.

What happened after his death, no one knows. Perhaps the Creator God never existed in the first place. After all, no one had ever seen him. What remained were the six “beings,” one for each world and each race.

Since they were fragments of the God, we’ll call them Gods. Each God descended into their respective world. They found their people, huddling together in their vast worlds, and worked to help them prosper.

However, not all of the worlds’ races prospered smoothly. In particular, the world of dragons and the world of demons remained primitive for a long time. The long-lived, powerful, and robust beings in those worlds could survive without developing civilizations.

Yet, both the Dragon World and the Demon World were harsh environments. In such a world, teeming with vicious dragons and beasts, seizing dominance was no easy feat. Despite having the power to rule their worlds, the dragon and demon races remained stagnant.

And because of that, perhaps one God felt pity for them, or maybe it was impatience...

But one of the Gods made a proposal.

"Why don't we meet regularly and hold discussions? Let’s exchange information about our worlds and use it to help each other prosper."

This God was the Human God, the deity of the human world.

Humans had the shortest lifespans and were the weakest. Most of them died before they even lived for ten years, succumbing to illness or injury.[2]

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[2] The “illness” was Dryne Syndrome.

However, the human world was not a harsh one, but rather abundant with nature and full of resources and food.

As a result, the human race prospered faster than any other. A moderately challenging environment fostered wisdom, and rapid generational change enriched their knowledge. The quicker a race prospers, the faster it accumulates the knowledge and wisdom it needs.

The Human God shared this knowledge with the other Gods. Thanks to this, the Dragonfolk and Demons learned many things. Starting with language and writing, to the knowledge of living in groups and establishing order. These things brought the light of civilization to races that once lived no differently from beasts.

Of course, the other races didn't just receive.

They shared their own strengths with the humans as well.

The Dragonfolk taught humans how to harness the power within their bodies. The Demons taught humans how to alter their bodies to withstand such power.

The Beastfolk taught humans how to tame and live alongside savage creatures.

The Seafolk taught humans how to filter water and keep it pure.

The Skyfolk taught humans how to read the winds and control the weather.

The six worlds supported each other, aiming for prosperity together.

Though the human world, with its rapid renewal, flourished the most, every world thrived in its own way. All the Gods believed that their prosperity would continue for thousands or tens of thousands of years without end.

None of them knew at the time.

Not the six Gods, nor perhaps even the Creator God.

That in the shadows of the worlds, a single entity had quietly been born...

Thus, the worlds were born, and tens of thousands of years passed.

That being said, from today's perspective, it was still a distant past. To you, it would be considered the age of myths. During that time, I was in a remote corner of the Demon World.

Of course, I had no name.

I must have been young, freshly born, but my body size wasn't much different from what it is now. Well, maybe a little smaller.

One head, two arms and two legs, pale and translucent skin, and wings sprouting from my back. In that remote corner of the Demon World, dense miasma filled the air, and vicious Beasts roamed the land—it was a land of death. At the time, I had no way of knowing, but the Demons referred to it as the "Edge of the World."

In a cave nestled in that corner, I had my lair. No one knew how long I had been there. Not even I knew. By the time I became aware of my surroundings, I was in that cave, surviving by eating the Beasts.

Hm? You think I just popped up in such a place all of a sudden?

Well, I don't remember, and no one else knows, so it can't be helped.

Maybe I was born in a Demon settlement and abandoned. Maybe I was born in another world and somehow transported here. At that time, strange things were beginning to happen in the six worlds, so nothing would be surprising. In any case, by the time I had any sense of myself, there was no one around. And I didn't find that particularly odd.

After all, I knew nothing.

I didn't know there were other people, how they lived, conversations, studies, magic—nothing.

I might think I'm a bit more knowledgeable than the average person now, but without someone to teach you, that's just how it is.

My daily routine was simple: crawl out of the cave when the sun rose, hunt down Beasts, eat until full, then return to the cave to sleep, repeating this cycle over and over again.

The Beasts were ferocious creatures.[3]

Each one was as large as a small mountain, incredibly strong, yet agile, and they even formed packs. The top beings in the Demon World were people, in other words, the Demons.

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[3] To be clear, these are "Demon Beasts" (魔獣)but Rifujin used Furigana above to clarify that the pronunciation was "Beast" (ビスート) So have that in mind.

But even those Demons couldn't defeat these Beasts without ganging up on them. Yet, I devoured these Beasts with ease. I would quietly sneak up, pounce on them, pin them down, bite into them, and tear them apart.

I did it all alone.

Yes, even back then, I had great power. I had enough strength to overpower one or two Beasts. But it wasn't just strength—I had cunning, too. I had the wits to deceive the Beasts and trap them. That's why I had no trouble living in that corner of the Demon World. I lived solely by instinct, hunting Beasts, fully convinced that I would continue living this way until I died.

But, as with all things, a turning point came.

One day, I stumbled upon something.

Can you guess what?

A family of Beasts.

As I crouched in the shadows, ready to strike, the Beasts huddled together, grooming each other's bodies, messing around and playing with each other.

It’s hard to put into words how I felt when I saw that.

It was like suddenly realizing I was completely left behind in the world, a suffocating mix of anxiety and unease.

Well, in a word, I guess it was loneliness.

I killed and ate that family of Beasts, but the loneliness didn’t go away. Even when I returned to my cave and laid down, the loneliness remained. In fact, the more time I spent in the dark cave, the stronger the loneliness became. I looked at my hands and feet in the darkness.

My hands and feet were completely different from those of the Beasts. I was a creature entirely different from the Beasts. But I had never seen another being that looked like me. When I came to that realization, the loneliness within me reached its limits.

I couldn’t stand it anymore and rushed outside.

I left my territory and wandered aimlessly, with no destination in mind. Along the way, I killed many Beasts. There were all kinds of Beasts—ones with eight legs, ones with three faces, even ones made of swarms of tiny insects. But none of them were like me. I killed the Beasts and kept wandering. And then I found it. A collection of square buildings surrounded by tall walls.

Yes, a town.

A Demon town.

Inside that town were creatures that looked just like me.

One head, two arms, two legs.

Not exactly identical—there were some small differences between individuals—but they resembled me far more than any of the Beasts I’d seen. There were many of them. They lived together in groups.

I was overjoyed.

I had found others like me.

I thought I had finally found a way to rid myself of this overwhelming loneliness. With excitement in my heart, I approached the town. However, the first person who discovered me screamed in terror.

"Monster!"

Before my confused eyes, people quickly gathered. Each of them was armed with a weapon. Why did they react that way when they saw me?

At the time, I didn't understand anything. After all, I had never seen my own reflection. I didn't realize it. I had no clue that something about my appearance was clearly different from the townspeople.

My claws and fangs?

No, that wasn't it. Many of the Demons have claws and fangs.

These golden eyes?

No, that wasn't it either. Although none of the Demons had golden eyes, many had different kinds of eyes. What disturbed them the most, what they found the most ominous, was my hair.

Look, see for yourself.

My hair is a mottled pattern of white and green. And if you stare at it for long enough, the pattern seems to shift and move, doesn't it? You might be used to it by now, but I hear that, to those who see it, it stirs a deep unease and dread, bringing up feelings of foreboding and unease in their hearts. Just that was enough reason for the townspeople to call me a monster.

They surrounded me with their weapons, directing clear hostility and murderous intent toward me. In response, I desperately tried to show that I was harmless. I could've run away.

But somewhere deep down, I thought I'd be fine, even if they attacked. After all, surrounding me and showing hostility meant they acknowledged I was stronger than them, didn't it?

Honestly, I probably could've won if I fought them.

But any sense of confidence vanished when a certain man appeared.

He had a massive body, black skin, and six arms.

Yes, a Demon King.

He suddenly attacked me.

He was incredibly strong. I fought back with all my might, but he struck me down, shattered my claws, and broke my wings.

I resisted as hard as I could, but there was no chance of victory. Faced with an opponent stronger than myself for the first time, I had no choice but to flee. Dragging my wounded body, I ran for my life. I was terrified of death.

I didn’t want to be killed. I didn’t want to die. But more than that, I was overwhelmed by sadness. The sadness of not being accepted by those who looked like me. I dragged my battered body back to my lair.

The dark, quiet, damp cave was still filled with loneliness.

Pain, sadness, and loneliness.

That was all that remained for me. I wasn’t angry.

I only had one question: why?

That question grew inside me, and I kept asking myself over and over. But I couldn’t find an answer. Maybe it was because I couldn’t find an answer. Once my wounds healed, I headed back to the settlement again.

I knew it.

I knew it would only end the same way. But I couldn’t stop myself from going. Loneliness was far worse than pain. And so, I kept approaching the settlement, watching it with envious eyes, eventually getting too close and being chased away. I repeated that process over and over.

At the time, I didn’t know it, but I was feared by the Demons as a "Humanoid Beast." [4] They were terrified of my relentless persistence; my resilience was so strong that even the Demon King couldn’t finish me off. And so, I lived, tormented by loneliness, for hundreds of years. But all things come to an end.

One day, I suffered a fatal wound.

It wasn’t because I lost to the Demon King.

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[4] Another way to put it would be “Man Shaped Beast”.

I lost to a Beast.

It was a creature unlike anything I'd ever seen before.

Its body was three times the size of a regular Beast, yet it moved several times faster, had multiple heads, and spewed flames and poisonous mist. Its strength was incomparable to any Beast I had encountered.

Though I call it a Beast, in truth, it wasn't a Beast at all.

It was a Monster.[5]

The monsters of the Demon World were far stronger than the ones that roam around today. I was burned, pierced, and beaten, and barely escaped with my life. Normally, I would return to my cave, eat something, sleep, and my wounds would heal. But that time, my wounds didn't fully heal, and I kept bleeding. It was probably due to the monster's poison.

As I lay in my cave, I instinctively knew I was going to die. I didn't know much about the world, but I had some understanding of death. After all, I had killed and eaten countless Beasts. I had seen thousands, maybe tens of thousands of deaths. I knew what death was. My consciousness was fading in and out, and I understood that once it faded completely, I would die. And I knew that moment wasn't far off.

I desperately wanted to survive, but there was nothing I could do. If it were me now, I would've used some sort of detoxification magic, but back then, I knew nothing. And it was at that time... that he appeared.

"Hmm, so the rumors about a Humanoid Beast were true... How fascinating."

From my perspective, it felt like I suddenly became aware of a person inside my lair. He stood beside me, looking down at my bloodied, prone body without me even noticing his approach.

"A hybrid of Demon and Dragonfolk? I wonder where and how you were born."

I hazily looked up at him.

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[5] Just like with the "Beast" this is a "Demon Monster" (魔物) but Rifujin added the furigana for just the word "Monster" (モンスター) to clarify.

He had a form very similar to mine.

One head, two arms and legs.

Wings on his back.

Golden eyes.

Long, sharp fangs and claws.

He looked exactly like me.

The only differences were that his hair was silver, and his skin was covered in silvery scales.

"Is this due to the influence of the monsters as well?"

I had no strength left to rise, so I simply stared at him.

Our eyes met.

Though his gaze was sharp, I remember it felt strangely warm. It was a look I had never received before.

"Well, whatever. If the Demon God hasn't dealt with you, then he won't complain if I take you. I can find plenty of uses for you..."

Of course, I didn't remember the meaning of those words at the time. But I clearly remembered the tone of his voice.

I could never forget it.

Later, when I learned to understand language, I realized that's what he had said. Standing directly above me, he clenched his fist tightly. His sharp claws dug into his palm, and red blood began to drip. And the red droplets fell into my wounds. And in an instant, the wounds that had shown no sign of healing began to close up.

Once my injuries disappeared, he took off his cloak and wrapped it around me. Then, as I looked up in shock, my pain vanishing along with my wounds, he picked me up under his arm and walked out of the lair.

At the entrance, there was a huge corpse.

I was shocked once again.

I recognized it.

It was the creature that had almost killed me.

Now, it lay there, lifeless and brutalized.

It had probably tracked me to my lair, intent on finishing me off... only to be killed by him.

"A monster, huh...? Good thing they don’t appear too often in my world."

As he said this, my consciousness faded away.

When I woke up again, the scenery around me had completely changed.

The familiar poison swamps, the miasmic fog, and the cracked red-brown earth were gone.

What I saw was a mountain.

But not just any mountain.

It was upside-down.

The mountain was growing down from the sky.

"!"

For a moment, I thought I was being held upside-down. Or maybe the person carrying me was moving upside-down.

But that was not the case.

The gravity pulling at me was definitely downward. There really was a mountain above us. And when I looked down, I saw the sky.

A vast, clear blue sky, stretching endlessly with white clouds drifting by.

Though at first, I didn’t realize it was the sky. After all, the sky in the Demon World was always gray. That’s when I noticed I was flying.

No, it wasn’t me.

The person carrying me was the one flying.

Yes, the man who had wrapped me in his cloak and taken me away was flying through the air with me in his arms.

"Are you awake? Don’t struggle now."

The man said this once he noticed I was awake. Since I had never spoken a word in my life, I didn’t understand the meaning of what he said. But I do remember feeling fear as I looked down at the sky below us. I curled up tightly in his arms. Satisfied by my reaction, he increased his speed. And so, we flew through the sky for a while.

Though the landscape was mostly just mountains and sky, it was all new to me. The man offered no explanations, and I had no knowledge of where we were. But I instinctively understood that I was now in a different world than the one I had lived in before.

Not the lonely world where I was chased away from settlements, but a different one. I likely wouldn’t return.

The thought made me feel a slight pang of nostalgia for that dark, damp lair, but I quickly brushed it away, focusing on the new scenery. It wasn’t a place worth reminiscing about.

After a while, a particularly massive mountain came into view. It was so tall that its summit was lost from sight. As we approached the mountain, which now filled my entire field of vision, the man silently flapped his wings and began to descend.

Is there something below?

I looked down and saw something on the mountainside. With my limited knowledge, I couldn’t describe it, but if I had known better, I would have called it a “landing platform.”

A stone slab jutted out from the mountainside, leading to a large entrance in the mountain. The platform, made of rock and wood, was clearly man-made. As we got closer, I saw several people standing on the platform.

They looked exactly like the man.

Beings with wings, scales, fangs, claws, and golden eyes.

“It’s Lord Dragon God!”

“Lord Dragon God has returned!”

“Everyone, prepare to welcome him!”

...Yes, that was his true identity—Lord Dragon God.

He was the ruler of the Dragonfolk, the king of the Dragon World.

The moment they spotted Lord Dragon God; the people began bustling about. In no time, they lined up on the largest platform in the center, awaiting Lord Dragon God's arrival.

So many people.

The sight of them made me shrink back again. The memories of being driven away by the Demon King in the Demon World resurfaced.

I feared they might attack me.

"Welcome back!"

But to my surprise, they didn’t attack.

When Lord Dragon God landed, everyone standing in formation crossed their fists over their chests and folded their wings. Their expressions were filled with pride and joy. I had never seen such expressions before, but I could tell there was no hostility.

“Welcome back, Lord Dragon God.”

Among the crowd, I noticed a man who stood out slightly. He was a little larger than the others, and his presence felt different. His scales had a faint greenish tint, giving off a calm impression.

But what stood out most were his eyes.

Like the others, they were golden, but they held an ephemeral fragility, mixed with a strong conviction to see something through to the end. At a glance, I could tell this man was the leader of the group.

But of course, the true leader was Lord Dragon God himself.

As Lord Dragon God approached, the man crossed his fists over his chest and folded his wings. It was the Dragonfolk's deepest bow of respect.

“How did the meeting go this time?”

“Szilard? Not much progress so far. How were things while I was away?”

“No changes here either, except for two monster incidents.”

“How many casualties?”

“Three. Two during the first incident, and one in the second. Minimal losses... What is that?”

The man called Szilard noticed me in Lord Dragon God's arms.

“I found him at the edge of the Demon World. A child of both Demon and Dragonfolk.”

“I’ve never heard of any Dragonfolk crossing into the Demon World.”

“It might be connected to the monster outbreaks.”

“I see. What will you do with him?”

“I will raise him.”

When Lord Dragon God said this, Szilard glared at me. Perhaps he was wary of a child with such an ominous hair color. But he didn’t question Lord Dragon God’s decision. Szilard was one of those who deeply revered and trusted Lord Dragon God. He wouldn’t criticize his actions.

Accepting the decision, Szilard unfolded his arms and stepped back. Without saying anything further, Lord Dragon God went into the mountain from the landing platform. With me in his arms, of course.

He walked through a dimly lit, square-shaped corridor. I had always assumed that caves were dark and narrow, but this corridor shattered that assumption. Ahead, there was a massive hollow space.

The enormous cavern was supported by several thick pillars, and round buildings of many shapes were attached to the ground, ceiling, and the pillars themselves. A strong light source near the center of the pillars illuminated the cave, making it as bright as daytime. And between the round buildings, people with wings flew back and forth.

It was a town.

The interior of the mountain had been hollowed out to form a town. Lord Dragon God spread his wings and took off. Though people were flying all around the town, the moment they saw Lord Dragon God, they stopped and crossed their arms over their chests. Without acknowledging them, Lord Dragon God flew on. It was easy to see where he was headed.

At the very back of the town stood the largest building. From a distance, it looked like a simple round structure, but as we drew closer, I could see intricate reliefs carved all over it. Lord Dragon God landed on a slightly protruding platform near the center of the building. Then, without hesitation, he walked inside.

The interior was just as spacious as it appeared from outside. There was a grand hall, bedrooms, and corridors. All of it was more luxurious than anything I had ever seen. Without a word, Lord Dragon God descended the stairs. There was no hesitation in his movements. It seemed that the destination had already been decided. Soon, we arrived at a certain room, and Lord Dragon God came to a halt. He only stopped for a few seconds, as if remembering something. After that brief pause, Lord Dragon God knocked on the door. A light knock, twice. Then, he opened the door.

"I'm back."

"Welcome home, my Lord."[6]

Inside, I saw a soft-looking bed, a wooden table, a leather chair, and sitting in the chair was a person.

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[6] Lunaria uses “Danna-sama” (旦那様) to refer to the Dragon God, this might be “the Lord”, “Master” or “Husband” and it’s used to refer to the husband as the “Head of the House”. A sign of high respect. Lilia uses this to refer to Paul.

A woman.

She looked completely different from the people I had seen at the landing platform or flying around the town. Her skin was white, with a slight red tint, soft-looking without any scales. She had no wings, no tail. She didn’t have sharp fangs or claws either. And her belly was slightly swollen.

She was from a species I didn’t recognize.

"And, who is this child?"

"A child between a Dragonfolk and a Demon. I found him at the edge of the Demon World, nearly dead."

"Oh, I see... Will you raise him?"

"Yes."

"Then, will this child be your adopted son?"

"Is there a problem?"

"No, everything is as Lord Dragon God wills it."

Lord Dragon God set me down in the room and turned to leave.

But the woman stopped him.

"Um, my Lord, what is this child's name?"

At her words, Lord Dragon God turned back and, with a troubled expression, shook his head.

"He doesn't have one."

"That's not acceptable. You must give him a proper name. It's the husband’s role to name the children."

"Even one that I picked up?"

"Yes."

With that, the man looked down at me. I looked up at Lord Dragon God, waiting for his next words.

"...Laplace. Your name is Laplace."

Of course, I didn’t know any words yet. That was the first time I had ever exchanged words with anyone. But I understood that the man standing before me had just spoken something very important to me.

"A... Ap... La... Pla... Ce..."

So, I desperately repeated it.

That word—my name—I repeated it so I wouldn’t forget it.

And thus, I—Laplace—was born.

Chapter 3: A Member of the Flock

Laplace.

That was the name I was given.

I was brought to the Dragon World.

It was a harsh world, no less brutal than the Demon World.

A world where the mountains reigned above where the sky should be, and the sky lay upon below where the earth should be. At the base of the mountains lived massive dragons that couldn't fly. But the skies weren't safe either, as enormous dragons soared through them. Small creatures without wings clung to the mountainside, living precariously where they hung like icicles. Even in such a world, people reigned supreme.

They were called the Dragonfolk.

Possessing wings and sharp claws, they flew freely and wielded immense power to hunt dragons in packs. That's the kind of race they were.

Yet they weren't always rulers. Once, they were weak, hiding in caves midway up the mountainside, living furtively in fear of the giant dragons. It was one man who changed everything.

Yes, it was Lord Dragon God.

Lord Dragon God appeared before the cowering Dragonfolk one day and demonstrated his power. He showed them the strength dormant within the Dragonfolk and how to wield it.

The Dragonfolk possessed a formidable force called "Dragon Aura".[7]

By using Dragon Aura, they could multiply their physical abilities, harden their skin, and even break through the sturdy bodies of dragons with a single blow. Though the other races had a similar power as well, the Dragonfolk's power far surpassed that of the others.

It was the ultimate power.

With Lord Dragon God guiding them on how to draw out his power and how to use it, the Dragonfolk became the rulers of the world.

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[7] Past translations called it "Dragon Touki" but that is not right. This is "Tatsuki" (龍気) and just as Laplace says, it's different from "Touki" (闘気), in that word there's no "Tou" (闘) which means "Fight" or "War", hence, that's not Dragon "Touki".

They banded together, increased their numbers, and began to prey on dragons, rising to the top of the food chain. Under Lord Dragon God's leadership, they built a town, exchanged information with other worlds, developed various cultures, and flourished.

However, in terms of civilization, they weren't much more advanced than the Demons... specially compared to the world today. After all, they were so powerful they could survive without the need of developing further.

But the idea of a world without the threat of external enemies.

A world where you don't have to hunt because food was plentiful and someone would serve you, and there was no need to fear or feel anxious about hunger.

That kind of peace was an unknown concept to me at the time.

I was given a room in Lord Dragon God's mansion. It was the most luxurious place in the Dragon World. The mansion had many rooms and numerous servants. The room I was given was small and simple, but it was far more comfortable than the cave I had lived in.

It had everything I needed—bedding, food, clothing. The mansion was vast, and the servants were many. Yet, there weren't many people they served.

Only Lord Dragon God and his wife, Lady Lunaria.

Lady Lunaria was mostly confined to the house due to her pregnancy. Lord Dragon God was often away, returning only every few days, but always visiting her when he did. She was treated like a precious treasure.

She was loved by the other Dragonfolk members, with many visitors coming to see her. Every day, someone would visit, talk with her, have a meal with her, and then leave.

However, if you compare the time when there were guests and the time when there were not, the latter was longer. During such times, Lady Lunaria stayed by my side almost constantly.

"If Lord Dragon God has adopted you, then you are my child, and this is your home. Feel at ease here."

She followed Lord Dragon God's words and decided to raise me. However, she didn't do much for me. She simply visited my room, sat by my side as I huddled in a corner, and gazed at me with loving eyes. As a demi-god of noble birth, the concept of 'teaching' didn't exist for her.

The servants were the ones who tended to me.

Following Lady Lunaria's orders, they treated me like a prince. They prepared meals, bathed me, and dressed me.

Unfortunately, everything—table manners, bathing, wearing clothes—was new to me.

When we were eating, I was scolded for not using utensils, when bathing, I screamed and cried when they scrubbed me with a hard Dragonfolk brush, and when dressing, I moved too vigorously that I quickly tore my clothes.

The servants frowned and scolded me, treating me as if they were scolding an unruly dog.

But Lady Lunaria was different.

"Oh, there’s no need to scold him. He may look big, but he’s like a baby. Let’s nurture him slowly, step by step."

She instructed the servants to give me easy to use utensils, suitable for me, a softer brush for my non-scaled skin, and they changed my clothes, they were now made from some stretchable fabric.

Her considerate actions showed she welcomed me. As Lord Dragon God instructed, she treated me like her own child. Even with her child soon to be born, she treated me, a stranger, as her own. Even now, thinking of Lady Lunaria’s vast kindness and deep compassion brings tears to my eyes.

"Even if Lord Dragon God brought him here, this..."

"He’s nothing more than a beast..."

However, the servants couldn't share the same sentiment. They did not welcome my presence. My hair was more ominous than anything they had ever seen, and it was clear my body harbored violent power. They must have believed that one day I would reveal my true nature and attack Lady Lunaria. But the servants were Dragonfolk. They couldn't oppose the will of Lord Dragon God or Lady Lunaria. Even if they were displeased, they followed their orders obediently. They likely served Lady Lunaria and watched over me with a strong resolve to protect her from me if necessary.

Eh? You’re asking if I did nothing?

No, I did what I could in my own way. Mainly, I just watched Lady Lunaria intently. Of course, it wasn’t with the intent of attacking her; I was determined to protect her.

Though I lacked knowledge, I had wisdom. I understood who healed my fatal wounds and rescued me from that place of loneliness. I recognized that this was the lair of my savior, the people around were his flock, and I had become a member of that flock. I swore to myself that I must protect this woman, the mate of the flock leader.

That said, being part of a flock was a new experience for me.

As a member of the flock, I did what I could. Every day, I walked through the mansion, checking every corner for any signs of trouble. I peeked into every room and looked outside from every window. I kept watch to ensure no external threats infiltrated the territory, a skill I had honed during my time fighting beasts as a 'Humanoid Beast.'

Of course, guests were an exception. I understood that the leader of my flock was also the leader of this entire region. Anyone showing respect to the top leader was no enemy.

And so, I protected Lady Lunaria and the mansion. I never left the mansion. It was as if I dedicated myself entirely to guarding this lair, my new purpose after being taken in.

Like a guard dog, you say? Please don't say that. While I understood what a flock was, I wasn't sure what else I should do. Though, looking back, I might have thought of myself as some sort of pet during those days.

Lady Lunaria was there, and I was there. The servants, wary of me, still tended to me dutifully. Occasionally, Lord Dragon God would return, converse with Lady Lunaria, and check on me.

Such a scene became a routine.

And thus, a year passed in the blink of an eye. A year might seem long, but for beings like us who live for tens of thousands of years, it felt like just two or three days. It wouldn't have been surprising if several hundred years had passed this way.

But that wasn't the case. Whether out of pity for me as a loyal guard dog or simply because I was seen as useless otherwise, Lord Dragon God decided to assign me an instructor.

"So, you're the child Lord Dragon God picked up!? The one with the cursed hair I've heard about!?"

The person who arrived was rather extreme. One day, she barged into Lord Dragon God's mansion and marched right up to me, who was sitting quietly in a corner, and began speaking sharply.

"Since Lord Dragon God entrusted me with your education, I will fulfill my duty with responsibility. I won't discriminate against you for being a half-demon. I'll treat you as just another scaleless Dragonfolk."

My instructor was a woman. She was a Dragonfolk with particularly large wings and beautiful white scales. Without minding my bewilderment, she continued to hurl words at me.

Naturally, her words didn't reach me. I didn't understand the language of the Dragonfolk yet. Lady Lunaria had raised me but hadn't taught me anything. As I've mentioned, she was royalty and likely never even considered taking on such a task herself.

The same went for the servants. Teaching language to someone who didn’t understand it wasn’t part of their duties.

"Grooowl..."

I let out a growl, trying to intimidate the woman. I saw her as an intruder, someone who had so arrogantly invaded the mansion and openly displayed hostility toward me, a member of the flock, albeit a low-ranking one.

"Hahaha! That’s a fine face you have there! But you will obey me absolutely! Defiance will not be tolerated!"

However, I did not attack.

"UAAAAAAAHHH!"

At first, I only raised my voice. By doing so, I could alert the entire flock to the danger. If they chose to fight, that was fine; if they decided to flee, I would hold the enemy back. I believed it was my duty to do so, as the lowest-ranking member of the flock.

"Come on, attack me! I'll beat you up first and make you understand your place!"

"Gruuuuh...!"

Despite the woman's continued provocations, I didn't move. I heard movement within the mansion, responding to my call. The members of the flock were approaching. Lady Lunaria’s servants were coming. I waited for them first.

"Oh, so you're smart enough not to attack immediately! Or are you just scared...?"

"What is happening here!?"

The first to arrive were the servants. Seeing them, I thought, "Our flock has gathered, we're ready to fight." I crouched, preparing to attack. If everyone attacked together, the chances of victory would increase. It was a piece of wisdom from my days in the Demon World, a universal rule still valid today.

"So, this is it... you finally reveal your true nature!"

But the servants didn’t act as I had expected. Instead of attacking the woman, they surrounded me. They rejected me, showing their claws, fangs, and open hostility.

"Uuh...?"

I was baffled. I was supposed to be a part of their flock. They had even fed me. Yet, they directed their hostility not at the external enemy but at me.

Well, they had been wary of me from the beginning, so perhaps it was inevitable.

Nevertheless, I felt a profound shock. I recalled the loneliness I had once experienced. Was I to be alone again, even here? The thought filled me with sadness.

"What is going on here?"

A calm, clear voice echoed through the room.

It was Lady Lunaria.

She entered gracefully, and upon seeing me, surrounded by everyone, who bared their claws and fangs, she looked displeased. To be honest, I thought she would side with the servants.

"Lady Lunaria, it’s dangerous. Please step back."

"What is dangerous?"

Lady Lunaria weaved through the servants, approaching me with quick steps. They tried to stop her, but she slipped through them like a mirage.

I didn't know the full extent of her powers, but she wasn’t just the wife of Lord Dragon God for nothing.

She gently embraced my trembling form, casting a reproachful glance at the others around us.

"Have you all forgotten Lord Dragon God's command to care for this child?"

"...We apologize!"

The servants immediately crossed their fists over their chests and folded their wings. I vividly remember this moment. After all, I had never been protected by anyone like this before.

But this was what I had longed for—to help and be helped, to protect and be protected, to live supporting one another. That’s why, even after learning about Lady Lunaria's origins later, I never felt anger or hatred towards her. Even now I still respect and adore her.

But let’s set that aside. Lady Lunaria, satisfied with the servants' remorseful demeanor, turned her gaze to the woman.

"And you, Dragon General, what’s the matter with you? What business brought you to my mansion?"

The woman, addressed as the Dragon General, also crossed her fists over her chest and folded her wings in front of Lady Lunaria. Unlike the servants, she did not appear remorseful.

"I have been appointed by Lord Dragon God as Laplace's tutor!"

Lady Lunaria looked momentarily surprised at her words. However, she must have been informed beforehand, as she quickly softened her demeanor.

"I see. So, this commotion was because Laplace wouldn’t listen?"

"Exactly. But it's no problem. I’m used to dealing with unruly students."

She said this without a hint of shame, and Lady Lunaria exhaled in relief. Then she gently stroked my wings and stood up leaving me bewildered.

"Laplace, make sure you learn properly."

With those words, Lady Lunaria left the room with light, graceful steps. The servants followed her, leaving just me and her behind in the room.

"Now then, let's continue. Come at me, coward!"

"....."

She resumed provoking me, gesturing with her finger to beckon me over. It was a clear invitation to attack.

As I would later learn, whenever she educated someone, she always began by establishing a hierarchy. She would speak with authority, and if challenged, she would overpower them to enforce submission. This method made her pupils listen, particularly effective with beasts or children who lacked understanding. In fact, she had tamed Red Dragons using this very method.

Given her expertise, it was likely why she was chosen to be my tutor — tasked with educating a wild child picked up from the Demon World.

However, I didn't react as she expected. I didn’t bare my fangs or claws but simply watched her. I didn’t growl or shout, staying silent and listening to her words.

"What's wrong? Are you scared now? Stand up!"

Growing impatient, she grabbed my arm roughly and pulled me to my feet. Yet, I remained unchanged, standing quietly and looking up at her, as if waiting for her next command.

By then, I had already realized she wasn't an enemy. I also sensed that she held a significant position within our flock. I reasoned that my earlier aggression was out of line, even reflecting on my mistake.

"Hmph, what a pathetic look."

Usually, she would have struck me for such a display, but this time she understood it would be counterproductive. Snorting, she released my arm.

"Show respect and obedience to me. I will never lie to you. Believe everything I say is true, so strive to understand from the bottom of your heart. I won't tolerate whining or excuses, and I won't allow you to say you can't do something, you will be wasting your time. But I won't cut corners; and I will definitely ensure you become a full-fledged Dragon Warrior."

She crossed her arms, wings flaring slightly as she declared this, looking down at me with authority. Arrogant as she sounded, she always followed through on her words. She was an incredible person.

"Remember this: being taught by me, one of the Five Dragon Generals, is a great honor. You might not understand honor now, but one day, you'll be grateful for what you learn from me."

After saying that, she remained silent for a brief moment. At the time, I didn't understand, but she probably had intended only to make an appearance and provide me with basic discipline — beating me into submission as needed. Since creatures don't learn from one or two blows. It requires repeated punishment until they understand that resistance is futile.

But since I was already submissive, there was no need to do so.

"I'll come again tomorrow! Maintain your current attitude! Got it!?"

With that, she turned on her heel. Yet, I had something to express. As she turned away, I made a specific gesture.

Reacting swiftly, she moved at an incredible speed. Before I could even process it, her knife-like hand was poised near my temple.

She likely thought I was a cunning beast pretending to be submissive, waiting to strike once her back was turned. As you know, there are many beasts and monsters like that.

As she spun around, she would have intended to parry my attack and retaliate with a powerful strike.

But it stopped short.

"...?"

That’s because there was no attack to parry. I had simply assumed a familiar pose—clasped fists and folded wings—the deepest bow of the Dragonfolk.

"Ah, Ap... La, Laplace."

I uttered just one word. Oh, and by the way, I barely understood much of what she had said, that was all I could manage to say.

"...Dola. I am Dola, Dragon General of the Armored Dragon Clan. Remember that well."

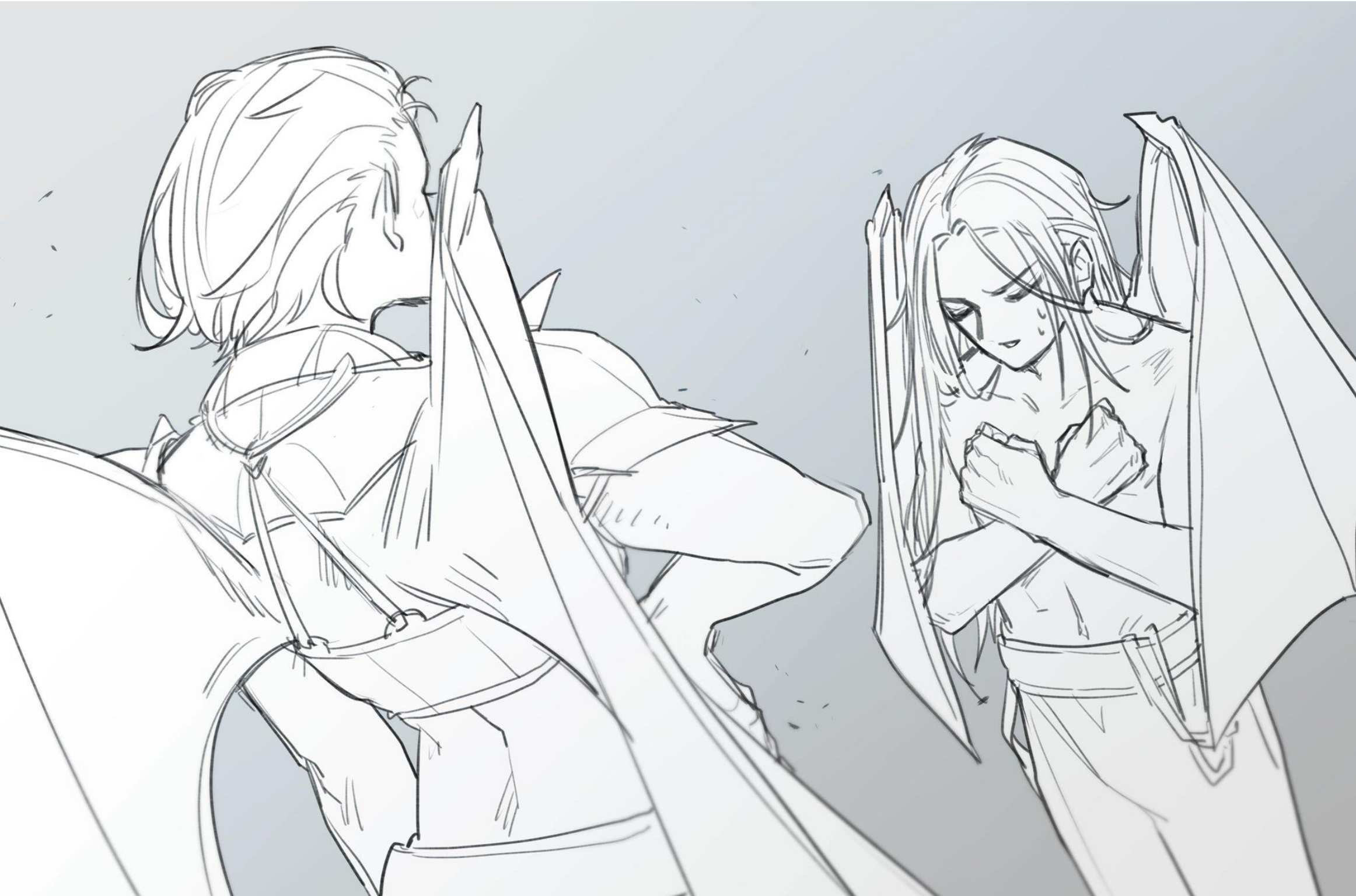
Dola, that was her name.

She introduced herself as if realizing she hadn’t done so before.

"Dola."

And so, I remembered. The first thing I learned from my tutor was her name.

Thus began my education under Dragon General Dola the very next day.



Chapter 4: Training of the Dragonfolk

For the first year, Lady Dola focused solely on teaching me the language. Without mastering the language, other forms of learning would have been impossible. Lady Dola estimated it would take about ten years for me to fully grasp the language.

When taming a wild Red Dragon, it generally took that long for them to understand the language of the Dragonfolk. Given that I, too, had lived in a world devoid of language, she likely assumed it would take me just as long.

However, contrary to Lady Dola’s expectations, my ability to learn was exceptional. More than my learning ability, it was my eagerness to learn that stood out. I memorized every word she spoke, practiced repetitively, and endeavored to understand their meaning. Like a sponge absorbing water, I soaked up knowledge and mastered the Dragonfolk's language in less than a year. After that, things progressed swiftly.

Lady Dola began teaching me about letters, history, the world, societal roles, hierarchies, etiquette, and industries—everything considered common knowledge among the Dragonfolk.

"——In the skies, there are mountains, and where the earth should be, there is the sky. Earth Dragons live at the base of the mountains, while Red Dragons and Blue Dragons build their nests closer to the summits."

"Yes."

"The difference in habitat between the Red and Blue is whether they live above or below the clouds. Blue Dragons fly lower. They descend to the mountains only once every few hundred years during breeding season. Red Dragons are more ferocious and have stronger territorial instincts. It was the Red Dragons that attacked and preyed upon our kind who lived in the middle of the mountain."

"Yes. But that’s in the past."

"Indeed. The days of Red Dragons 'fighting' the Dragonfolk are long gone. Now, Red Dragons are merely prey. The domestication of these dragons has also advanced."

"And it is Lady Dola who oversees this domestication."

"Correct. You remember well. Any questions so far?"

"Yes. What lies beneath the sky?"

"It's said that there is a massive black serpent that devours any fallen corpses. I've never seen it myself though."

Lady Dola always answered my questions.

If there was something she didn't know or hadn't seen, she admitted it, but she always tried to explain within the limits of her knowledge. On occasion, if there was something she didn't know but deemed essential to teach, she would learn it herself to instruct me later on.

Under normal circumstances, Lady Dola may not have been so dedicated. But she was known as the most loyal of the five Dragon Generals. Neglecting a direct order from Lord Dragon God was inconceivable for her.

As an educator, she was unmatched.

Looking back, being taught by Lady Dola was an honor in itself. Lord Dragon God must have had high hopes for me. Thanks to her, I gained comprehensive knowledge of the Dragon World.

What kind of knowledge, you ask?

Well, there's so much, it's hard to explain all at once... First, the current location. The biggest mountain at the center of the Dragon World was named Dragon Roar Mountain.

Huh? You say it has the same name as this mountain we live on? Well of course, it's because I named it after that mountain after all.

But let's leave that aside for now.

Carved into the center of Dragon Roar Mountain was a town called Chaos.[8]

It served as the capital of the Dragonfolk.

It was the most populous, as all clans lived there.

It hosted numerous vital facilities: Lord Dragon God's mansion, administrative offices, postal services, libraries, research labs, stables, food storages, and the Dragon Warrior bases.

Of course, the Dragonfolk didn't only reside on Dragon Roar Mountain.

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[8] The previous translations named this city "Kayos". But the name is "Keios" or, as written in Katakana "Keioosu" (ケイオース). This is the English pronunciation of "Chaos," and it's very important that it is named like that. The reason for that, will come later...

There were 122 towns around the world, each home to different Dragonfolk clans. Compared to Chaos on Dragon Roar Mountain, these other towns were mere small settlements.

However, in the Dragon World, which was teeming with dangerous dragons, the concept of a 'small settlement' didn't exist. Each settlement maintained enough military power to annihilate a Red Dragons' nest. Otherwise, they'd be wiped out by a Red Dragons' full assault.

Hmm?

That doesn't sound like a myth to you?

It doesn't seem all that different from the towns of today from what you hear? That being said, it was already like that when I arrived.

After all, the methods of building these towns and layouts largely came from human influence. It might have been different before the Gods convened, but by that time, every world was likely similar.

But let's set that aside for now.

Lord Dragon God poured his love upon all the Dragonfolk, and tried to protect all Dragon Clans. However, with 122 towns, it was impossible to protect every single one.

Lord Dragon God, though incredible, was not omniscient or omnipotent.

There are times when some areas fall out of his sight.

Therefore, Lord Dragon God appointed five of the strongest among the Dragonfolk as Dragon Generals to guard the whole world.

These were the Five Dragon Generals:

Szilard, the Dragon General of the Holy Dragon Clan.

Maxwell, the Dragon General of the Dark Dragon Clan.

Kháos,[9] the Dragon General of the Mad Dragon Clan.

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[9] The most probable reason for why the last translation choose "Kayos" for the city was this guy. His name is "Kaos" (カオス) or "Kaosu," which stands for "χάος" (Kháos). Which would be the Greek pronunciation of the word.

Crystal, the Dragon General of the Steel Dragon Clan.[10]

Dola, the Dragon General of the Armored Dragon Clan.

In place of the busy Lord Dragon God, they protected the Dragonfolk.

The Five Dragon Generals pledged absolute loyalty to Lord Dragon God, who in turn entrusted them with crucial tasks. Even now, when the Dragonfolk's numbers have grown, and their protection is less needed, this structure remains unchanged.

In fact, the bond between them has deepened over time.

Lady Dola was said to be the most loyal of the Five Dragon Generals.

And she took pride in this reputation.

She wished for all Dragon Clans, including her own, to share her level of loyalty. There was no particular reason—it was just her personal preference. She simply believed it to be only proper.

"If Lord Dragon God saved your life, then you should dedicate your entire being to serving him without reserve."

Hence, she taught me the same.

At every opportunity, she instilled this belief.

"Yes, Lady Dola. I will give my all for Lord Dragon God."

Naturally, I agreed wholeheartedly.

Her teaching methods might have bordered on indoctrination, but I intended to follow her guidance from the beginning. After all, I still remember the loneliness I felt in the Demon World, the despair of facing death, and the day I was saved from it.

"Hehe, you are the most promising student I've ever had."

Lady Dola was satisfied seeing my overflowing loyalty.

When Lady Dola repeatedly emphasized something this strongly, most people would eventually get upset and say, "I get it, you don't have to

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[10] The term used here is Gōryū (剛龍), where "Gou" (剛) can be translated either to "Sturdy" or "Mighty". After a poll, most people chose "Steel Dragon" as in Superman "the Man of Steel" since it captures both "mighty" and the "sturdy".

repeat it so many times." Of course, it's not as if they disregarded Lord Dragon God.

Every member of the Dragonfolk revered Lord Dragon God as a deity and swore loyalty to him. However, according to Lady Dola, the very moment someone says, "Stop repeating it," it shows a lack of loyalty.

After all, if you're truly loyal then you should be able to express it with your words at any time, no matter the situation.

Just like me.

Oh, and around that time, I also learned about Lady Lunaria.

"Lady Lunaria is the wife of Lord Dragon God. I've heard she's the daughter of a God from another world called the Human God. Though I don't know all the details."

Lady Lunaria was a woman brought by Lord Dragon God. It must have been about a thousand years ago. For Lady Dola and the others, that wasn't too long ago. One day, Lord Dragon God suddenly brought Lady Lunaria along and declared that she would be his wife. Why Lord Dragon God chose someone from another race and not from the Dragonfolk remains a mystery.

He never explained it.

Naturally, some were displeased.

They wondered why he didn't choose from among them. There were plenty of women within the Dragonfolk who were suitable for Lord Dragon God. Even Lady Dola could have been one of them.

Yet, Lady Dola didn't object to not being chosen.

She said this:

"Lord Dragon God must have a profound reason. He always considers the Dragonfolk when making decisions. Even if we can't understand it, it's surely for the future of the Dragonfolk. It's not for us to question."

Does that sound like blind faith to you?

If so, it's because you don't know the extent of her loyalty.

Let's get back to Lady Lunaria.

Of course, the resentment towards Lady Lunaria within the Dragonfolk was something of the past. It's said that the dissatisfaction subsided about a hundred years after she arrived.

Lady Lunaria was a benevolent, Goddess-like figure.

Strangely enough, talking to her would fill anyone with kindness. It felt as though all could be forgiven. It seems that anyone who spoke to her would accept her as Lord Dragon God’s wife.

I, too, liked Lady Lunaria for reasons beyond loyalty.

I never forgot how, a year ago, she stood up for me and protected me. She genuinely welcomed me.

It might have been because of Lord Dragon God's orders, and though she spoke little, she didn’t resent me and took care of me.

And precisely because it was her home, I decided not only to be loyal to Lord Dragon God but to protect the flock and this mansion where the flock lived. I could never say it aloud, nor would it be appropriate, but... she was like a mother to me.

...And so, I continued to absorb knowledge about the Dragon World. By the time about five years had passed, there was hardly anything I didn't know.

Although, since I hadn't seen much of it with my own eyes, I couldn't claim I truly knew everything.

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Once I had learned the language and gained enough knowledge, Lady Dola began taking me outside. The bustling town, with many members of the Dragonfolk flying around, thrilled me.

I had always dreamed of stepping into such a town since my days in the Demon World. The wide spaces, numerous houses, lively shops, and the plaza where events were held.

Everything was so fresh.

However, the Dragonfolk members passing by never welcomed me. They frowned at my ominous hair and kept their distance. Yet, they didn't show hostility, surround me, or try to drive me out of town. The fact that I was a child brought by Lord Dragon God was already well-known, but more importantly, Lady Dola was carrying me. Upon seeing Lady Dola, they all clenched their fists and crossed them over their chests.

I wouldn’t be driven out. Knowing this, I felt a strong urge to explore. What were those large buildings? What was over there? I had knowledge from recent teachings, but there was still so much I hadn’t actually seen.

My curiosity was boundless.

Driven by it, I glanced around and asked Lady Dola about many things.

"Lady Dola, what's that?"

"A clothing shop."

"Lady Dola, what about that?"

"That's the Eastern Plaza. It looks like they're performing a play today."

"Lady Dola, someone is flying with a weapon."

"A Dragon Warrior. The weapons are made by Kháos."

Lady Dola patiently answered all my questions. Even the most obvious ones, she responded to every single one. If it were me, I might have silenced them halfway through.

"Lady Dola, I want to see inside that building!"

"Not now. We’ve arrived."

Lady Dola stopped her wings and landed on the ground.

We were in a massive plaza, more than a hundred meters in diameter. In the plaza, big Dragonfolks were wrestling in pairs. Some of them noticed Lady Dola and gave her their deepest bows.

Lady Dola acknowledged them gracefully and then turned to face me.

"Lady Dola, this is a training ground, isn’t it?"

"Indeed."

A training ground.

A place where Dragonfolk warriors trained their bodies.

"The Dragonfolk must be strong. Especially you, who was taken in by Lord Dragon God, must be able to defeat any threat to him. Isn’t that right?"

"Yes!"

"Good answer! Then you know what you must do here!"

"Yes!"

After knowledge came combat training.

For the Dragonfolk, who faced fierce dragons just beyond the town's borders, fighting was as important as language. Thus, both male and female members of the Dragonfolk learned how to fight at a certain age.

Well, actually, between language and combat, there was something else essential that normal Dragonfolk children learned first, but let's set that aside for now.

"Alright, come at me! I'll teach you how the Dragonfolk fight."

Lady Dola took a stance in front of me.

She lowered her waist, stood sideways, placing her piercing hands at the level of her waist and along the midline, and pulled her wings back, ready to fly at any moment. I mimicked her stance to the best of my ability.

"Fool!"

Suddenly, Lady Dola rebuked me, and I shuddered.

"Who told you to take a stance? I said to come at me! When I say come at me, you should bare your killing intent and aim to kill me!"

Ah... even now, when I remember it, her words were harsh.

She began by teaching the will to fight, rather than any specific techniques.

At first, she refused to teach detailed skills. The most crucial aspect of battle is the will to kill your opponent... the sheer intensity of that intent. Most of the Dragonfolk would be taken aback when Lady Dola told them this. They couldn't imagine killing Lady Dola, thinking it was impossible.

But luckily, I was different.

Those words made me loosen my stance and drop to all fours. It was the same stance I had used when I lived in the Demon World. With my eyes fixed on Lady Dola, my instructor, I decided that the opponent before me was someone I needed to kill and devour.

Did I have any doubts?

None at all. I understood what battle meant. Moreover, Lady Dola commanded me to do so. Thus, I had no choice but to obey.

"That's it, come at me."

Lady Dola accepted my killing intent head-on.

"Hmph...!"

I bent my limbs deeply and leaped toward Lady Dola. I aimed for her neck from the shortest distance. However, between her neck and me was her arm. If I charged straight ahead, she would undoubtedly thrust her hand forward, piercing me. My defeat would be inevitable. So, I moved my wings. I turned sharply, as if defying the laws of inertia.

It was a feint.

The creatures I had fought in the Demon World were ferocious beasts. Charging straight in wouldn't work against them. Hence, such maneuvers came naturally to me. I turned sharply while keeping my body facing Lady Dola and kicked off the ground, launching another attack at her.

A direct assault from the side.

I could see her exposed throat, with no arm acting as a shield. My fangs would tear through her throat, ending her life.

"Gyaah!"

But before I knew it, I let out a yelp like a dog and was blown away, I was shocked. I rolled on the ground, quickly got up, but felt intense pain in my shoulder. Looking down, I saw a hole in my shoulder, red blood oozing out. And Lady Dola was still in her stance, aiming at me.

She was facing me directly, even though I should have gotten around her. I was confused by the pain in my shoulder, unable to comprehend what had happened. Lady Dola then shouted at me.

"What's wrong? Is that all you've got? Move! Or I'll kill you!"

I bared my teeth.

I didn't know what had happened, but the fight wasn't over yet. Suddenly, I felt a shock and was blown backward.

When I raised my head after rolling on the ground, Lady Dola was standing where I had just been. The moment I realized this, the sand at her feet swirled upward.

Lady Dola had moved at a godlike speed and knocked me back.

To be honest, at this point, I realized I had no chance of winning. Yet I didn't let my fighting spirit wane and got into a stance on all fours.

I had to be the one to strike.

"...!"

I steadied my breath and attacked silently.

No battle cry.

I had always been alone, with no habit of intimidating my opponent. I simply attacked in silence, aiming to kill my opponent and eat them.

That was my only trait.

"Gaah!"

But Lady Dola was about to crush even that one trait of mine.

She was facing me.

Without lowering her guard, she aimed her hand at me. She did nothing. At least, that's how it appeared to me. But the reality was different. Lady Dola had reacted to my movements. She didn't fall for my feint, she used her wings to change direction in an instant, piercing me with her hand.

"What's wrong? Come on! Keep coming until you die! Or I'll kill you!"

As she spewed insults, Lady Dola continued her attacks. Each time I stood up, one of my limbs would get gouged, blood spurting out.

"Come on! The scales of the Dragonfolk grow stronger the more they're stripped away! You may not have scales, but it's the same for you! Harden yourself!"

I didn't give up.

Every time I was pierced or blown away, I stood up and faced Lady Dola.

Why did I do that?

Because Lady Dola told me to.

I was simply following my instructor's orders.

The combat training continued until I passed out.

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I learned something new after a few days of training. That day, as usual, I was beaten up and lost consciousness. Normally, I'd wake up in my room at Lord Dragon God's mansion.

"Wake up! Hey, wake up!"

But that day, I woke up in a slightly different place.

"From today on, after combat training, you'll do something else until nightfall."

It wasn't the circular training ground covered in sand, nor my room with just a bed. It was a gentle slope.

The slope had several platforms like launch pads, where much smaller children than me were running up and leaping off, fluttering their wings, only to fall to the ground. They were falling from a height of about 4-5 meters, but they were Dragonfolk. Despite sustaining scrapes, they quickly got up and climbed the slope again.

"...Where is this?"

"The flight training grounds."

When Lady Dola said that, several children ran up to her.

"Lady Dola!"

"Dragon General Dola!"

"I admire you! Please teach me how to fly!"

"Who’s that weird-haired guy!?"

The children approached Lady Dola and saluted her with crossed fists in utmost respect. One child pointed at me without saluting, but Lady Dola paid no mind. It’s a common occurrence among children.

"Today, I came to train this one who can't fly. I don't have time to teach you all how to fly. But flying is fundamental to the Dragonfolk. You must master it. It is for the sake of Lord Dragon God!"

"That guy still can't fly?"

"How lame! He's bigger than me!"

"I managed to fly to the yellow line today!"

"I reached the blue line!"

"Fools! Do not mock others!"

"Yes, ma'am," "Yes," "Yes."

Lady Dola dismissed the children and led me to the summit.

"Laplace. Where are we? Tell me."

"The flight training ground. It's a place where the Dragonfolk children train to fly."

Indeed, it was one of the many training facilities on Dragon Roar Mountain, specifically for flight training. It didn't have an official name, but the children called it the Flight Plaza.

The Dragonfolk have long lifespans but only reproduce once every few thousand years. Therefore, the number of children was never large. This scarcity made the education of children a priority for the Dragonfolk. Qualified instructors dedicated themselves fully to teaching.

However, there were no teachers at this flight training ground.

This is because learning to fly takes time. The children spent a hundred years repeatedly crashing until they eventually took to the skies. What was needed here wasn't a teacher.

It was sheer repetition of practice, over and over again.

Of course, in the initial stages, educators guided them, but after that, the children learned independently. Until they could fly. Even if it took tens or hundreds of years of crashing, they kept at it until they could fly. That's how most Dragonfolk eventually learned to fly.

Just as there's no birds that cannot fly, the Dragonfolk would inevitably learn to fly. At least, that was the ideal. But there are always a few exceptions. A small number of Dragonfolk never managed to fly.

And what happened to them?

Sadly, they were labeled as failures and ended up doing jobs that nobody else wanted. The children knew this, so they were desperate, and those who

couldn’t fly were mercilessly looked down upon. Even though, in the end, they all served under Lord Dragon God.

"What will you learn here?"

"To fly."

"Good, then fly."

"Yes."

Following Lady Dola's instruction, I stepped onto the launch platform. Below spread the plaza and the town of the Dragonfolk. It didn’t seem that high from below, but from above, it was quite tall. I spread my wings, flexing the muscles in my back to check their range of motion. Then, bending my knees, I leaped up without hesitation.

Flapping my wings twice, thrice, I aimed upwards.

But I quickly lost momentum and spiraled downwards.

I managed to twist mid-air and landed on all fours. Acting as if nothing had happened, I returned to the platform. I repeated the jumps and falls several times. Unlike the other children, I landed well and didn’t get hurt. My experiences from the Demon World had paid off.

However, in the Demon World, I had never flown. I didn’t even know that flying was possible. That’s why I couldn’t fly.

"Wait."

After several failed attempts, Lady Dola stopped me.

"Do you know how to fly?"

I shook my head. Then, Lady Dola patiently explained.

"Infuse your wings with 'Dragon Aura' to create a force field. Manipulate the force field to stay aloft and use the wind to glide. Understand?"

Even with her straightforward explanation, it wasn’t something I could grasp easily. Perhaps this is why teachers aren’t needed for flight training.

The wings of the Dragonfolk aren’t like those of birds. While they are organs for flying, they don’t rely on wind to lift off. They generate an anti-gravity force field that allows them to fly. Of course, once airborne, they must deal with air resistance, tilting their wings to convert the wind into lift and glide. However, Dragonfolk flight primarily depends on the force field. The lift is just an extra aid. By the way, the wings of Red Dragons and Blue Dragons function similarly.

"I understand."

I replied.

It wasn’t that I couldn’t channel Dragon Aura into my wings. In the Demon World, although I never flew, I did engage in aerial combat using my wings.

Flying, however, was a different matter.

It’s hard to explain in words. But that’s exactly why it took Dragonfolk children a hundred years of practice.

"Good, if you understand. Repeat until you can fly."

"Yes."

"I'll be back."

With those words, Lady Dola took off, leaving me behind.

Her flight was exemplary and elegant.

Her wing movements were efficient, her ascent smooth, and swift. The children tried to follow her but failed to keep up and fell.

After watching her leave, I returned to the platform.

Thus, the days of lessons in theory, combat, and flight continued.

The theory and combat lessons were going well. There’s not much to say about the theory lessons. In combat, initially, I would just charge in and get beaten, but gradually I learned tactics and stances. Through daily sparring with Lady Dola, my basic combat skills steadily improved.

However, flight remained a challenge.

After combat training, from afternoon until night, I kept jumping and falling. Every night, Lady Dola would return to see if I had learned to fly. Upon hearing I still couldn’t fly, she would mutter, "I see," and carry me back to the mansion.

Lady Dola never intervened.

Although she declared she wouldn’t go easy on me, she had nothing to say about the flight training. The Dragonfolk learned to fly alone through repeated practice. That was common knowledge.

Of course, I didn’t complain.

In silence, I climbed the jumping platform ten times more than the other children and fell ten times more. While I continued to fall, some of the many children managed to grasp the knack of generating force fields from their wings. A few figured out how to control their posture in midair.

One even learned to fly.

I started feeling a bit anxious too.

After all, I had been given the best teacher, Lady Dola, yet I hadn't achieved any results. To be honest, I already knew and could manage both the knack of generating force fields and controlling posture. But that was only when my feet were on the ground.

With my feet planted firmly on the ground, I could move at a speed surpassing even that of the beasts of the Demon World, I could easily outmaneuver them. Even back then, I could handle most Dragon Warriors without breaking a sweat.

However, those habits were likely hindering my ability to fly. Walking on the ground and flying in the air are fundamentally different. The body needs to be aligned vertically against gravity, and the direction for generating the force field is different from what I was accustomed to.

Flying wasn't something one could master overnight. That's why my frustration grew. I knew I could do it, yet I couldn't. Still, I didn't voice any complaints. Lady Dola had forbidden me from expressing any grievances or saying that I couldn't do it. And so, days passed with no results.

Every day, Lady Dola would come to see if I had managed to fly. I would always answer, "Not yet," and she would simply nod and leave. After training, I would return home exhausted, greeted by Lady Lunaria.

Even the servants began to recognize me as one of their own after I expressed my gratitude and loyalty to Lord Dragon God. Still, they didn't quite see me as one of Lord Dragon God's children.

Which was understandable. Even I had never thought of myself as anything more than a dog, not a foster child.

Ah, maybe that's why.

On the days when I came back especially beaten up, they would secretly give me food. Though they'd say, "You're not supposed to eat outside the set times," and all.

Looking back now, it really was just like how you'd treat a dog...

Haha, perhaps the feelings of the servants and mine were one and the same back then. Looking back, those are fond memories.

Lady Lunaria, while gently stroking her belly that grew a little larger with each passing year, treated me as a mother would. Though, whether due to her lack of maternal experience or my own ignorance of what a mother should be, she was nothing more than a Goddess to me. She was, how should I put it? aloof.

Still just being in her presence made me feel at ease. In hindsight, that sense of reassurance must have been proof of her being a demigod.

It was the perfect environment.

Intense training paired with a warm home.

Wrapped in such surroundings, it took me decades to become a fully-fledged Dragonfolk.

“Well, after that I... Oh?”

When Laplace glanced towards the chair, he saw the girl dozing off, swaying back and forth. Perhaps the story had been so dull that she fell asleep? No, it seemed that wasn’t the case.

“It’s already night...”

Looking out the window, Laplace saw a vast starry sky. Unlike the Dragon World, the stars were directly overhead.

To Laplace, it felt like only a few hours had passed. But for Rostelina, it must have been an entire day.

“I got so caught up in nostalgia that I ended up talking slowly. Now I’ve done it... I took all of Rostelina’s short day.”

As he gazed out the window, something massive obscured the view.

A red dragon.

The red dragon recognized Laplace and let out a low rumble, seemingly demanding something.

“Oh, my apologies. It took longer than I expected. Still, being a dragon yourself, you could at least go hunt your own food.”

“Grrrr...”

“Don’t say that. I didn’t expect time to pass so quickly either. They say time flies as you age, and it seems the same holds true for a half-blood like me.”

With that, Laplace gently picked up Rostelina. Walking quietly, he exited the room. Navigating the narrow hallway, he stopped in front of a door.

“Well, I had hoped to hear at least one of your thoughts...”

He softly opened the door.

Inside, the room was remarkably tidy, especially compared to the rest of the house’s clutter. Laplace gently placed Rostelina on the bed and covered

her with a blanket. There was no need to turn off any lights; there had never been any to begin with.

Laplace's eyes could see through the darkness effortlessly.

"Goodnight, Rostelina. Until tomorrow."

With that, Laplace closed the door and returned to his room.

Chapter 5: The End of Training

In the mountain range on the Central Continent, there was a place called Dragon Roar Mountain. As usual, a lone girl was struggling to carry something there.

It was Rostelina.

In the large bucket that Rostelina was carrying was a mountain of meat. Not even the girl knew what kind of meat it was. Laplace had brought it back and told her to feed it to the dragon.

Behind the house, there was a cave.

Inside, a massive dragon was sleeping, his eyes closed, letting out deep, rumbling breaths.

"Mister Dragon, Mister Dragon, it's time for breakfast!"

When Rostelina called out loudly, the dragon slowly opened his eyes.

Then, with a big yawn, he buried his head into the bucket placed before him and began nibbling on the meat inside.

Although, "nibbling" was an understatement, as each bite was equivalent to Rostelina’s entire meal.

Rostelina watched for a while, but eventually grew bored and began thrusting her hands forward with a whoosh.

"Mister Dragon, listen to this. I learned how the Dragonfolk fights from the Master! They fight like this. You position yourself like this, circle around like this, and then strike with a thrust! Like this! And then with a punch, like this! Take this!"

With that, Rostelina started tapping the dragon's massive claws with her tiny hands as he ate, all while moving in awkward, clumsy steps that could hardly be called graceful.

The dragon, seemingly unaffected, ignored her completely. However, perhaps annoyed by the tiny creature pestering him, or maybe wanting to play along just a bit, he lightly moved the tip of its claw.

It was a huge dragon.

Even just the tip of its claw was as large as Rostelina’s entire torso.

"Augh!"

Rostelina was sent flying by the claw and rolled across the ground.

"Ouch... that was mean..."

Rostelina wasn’t hurt. Rubbing the back of her head, she stood up, suddenly curious about something.

"...Mister Dragon, you're bigger than other dragons, aren't you?"

Rostelina had seen red dragons before. In fact, she saw them regularly. High up in Dragon Roar Mountain were nests of red dragons, and one could spot them simply by looking up at the sky. They would sometimes circle around the house, offering occasional close encounters.

Although, any red dragon circling the house would soon be driven away by the dragon behind it. Compared to those red dragons, the dragon before her was much larger. In terms of body size alone, he was at least twice as large as an average red dragon, and when he spread its wings, he was probably three times the size.

"Your scales are a beautiful red, your fangs are long, your tail is sleek, and your eyes are filled with intelligence."

At her words, the dragon snorted, as if to say, "You understand, don’t you?"

"I wonder, are you a dragon from the Dragon World, just like Master?"

She asked, but the dragon didn’t respond. He just continued to eat his meat contentedly. Dragons couldn’t speak, after all. Although, he did seem to understand her words...

"Oh, that's right!"

Rostelina suddenly remembered something.

The other day, she had fallen asleep in the middle of a story.

If she heard the rest of that story, she might learn more about the dragon.

With that thought, Rostelina dashed back to the house.

She entered the house and headed straight to the usual study.

As expected, Laplace was at his desk, writing something intently.

"Master! Master!"

"Hmm? Oh, Rostelina. What's the matter? You just went to sleep a little while ago. Did you have a nightmare?"

"No, I had a dream where I was flying freely in the sky! But that’s not important right now, Master!"

"What is it?"

Laplace looked at her with a puzzled expression.

"Tell me the rest of the story from the other day!"

"The story from the other day?"

"The story of how you came to the Dragon World, Master! Even though your life is so long, you haven’t told me much yet!"

At her words, Laplace made a bitter face.

"Oh, that story... But it's not particularly interesting. After becoming a proper adult, I took on jobs, made a name for myself, became someone important, and then lost everything. That's all."

"That doesn’t explain anything at all!"

"Is that so...?"

"Ah, Then, tell me about how you met Mister Dragon. You’ve known each other for a long time, right?"

Hearing that, Laplace clapped his hands as if he’d remembered something.

"Now that you mention it, I met Saleyakt during my first assignment. That would be a continuation of the story from the other day."

"See, I knew it!"

"Do you want to hear it?"

"I do!"

At her enthusiastic plea, Laplace shook his head with a resigned smile. He sighed as if to say there was no helping it, then adjusted his posture in the chair.

"Alright, sit down, Rostelina. I’ll continue the story from the other day."

"Yes!"

"Now then, where should I start... Hmm... Perhaps it’s easiest to begin from the day my training period ended. Yes, let’s start there."

And so, Laplace began to recount the story.

A tale from the distant age of myths.

Having been taken in by Lord Dragon God, my education had begun, and decades had passed. Days filled only with training in academics, combat, and flight. Day after day, nothing changed. The only change was that Lady Lunaria’s belly had grown slightly larger.

On that day, I was flying around above the training grounds. As usual, I was practicing my flight. Though, the way I flew was clearly different from the other Dragonfolk. Dragonfolk typically fly by lying flat. They first generate a field to float in the air, then catch the wind to create lift, gliding through the sky. When changing direction or regaining altitude, they generate the field again. It’s the most efficient way to fly.

But at the time, I was flying while standing upright, perpendicular to the ground. And I would repeatedly make sudden accelerations, stops, and turns, completely ignoring the laws of inertia.

For anyone familiar with how the Dragonfolk fly, it would have been a sight hard to believe. Indeed, on the slope of the training facility, there were many who looked up at me. It wasn't just children. There were also the Dragonfolk Warriors—with bodies twice larger than mine.

Some of them weren’t just watching; a few tried to imitate me, lost control of their movements, and ended up falling. I didn't pay it any mind.

I was wholly focused, repeatedly practicing the necessary flight trajectories. A steep ascent, a sharp turn at a right angle from the climb, zigzagging sharp turns, abrupt stops, hovering, rapid acceleration from a hover, steep descents, and then an abrupt stop, returning to the steep ascent at the start. It was that kind of routine.

The way I was flying was highly unstable and consumed a lot of Dragon Aura. Almost everyone who tried to mimic my flight failed. From the perspective of the Dragonfolk's flying techniques, it was extremely inefficient. However, it had its advantages. This method of flying, which hardly relied on lift, allowed for sharp turns in mid-air. After Lord Dragon God, the one reputed to have the highest flight performance was Maxwell

of the Five Dragon Generals, but my method of making sharp turns in mid-air clearly had a smaller turning radius than his. This gave a significant advantage in aerial combat.

"...!"

As I continued to fly like that, someone from the slope suddenly took off towards me. A woman of the Dragonfolk with particularly large wings and silver-white scales.

Yes, it was Lady Dola.

Lady Dola soared towards me with an artistic, smooth ascent and attacked without warning. This wasn't unusual. Lady Dola occasionally attacked me like this to teach me aerial combat. Lady Dola's flight speed was fast.

Unlike me, she didn't deviate from the conventional flying methods of the Dragonfolk, but her speed and flight techniques far surpassed mine.

She ascended at tremendous speed, performing tight turns repeatedly. And she caught up with me as I tried to escape with sharp turns. Normally, she would have gotten behind me at that point. However, my flying style had another advantage.

I could continue flying while facing my opponent head-on.

"Here I come, Laplace!"

"Yes!"

With Lady Dola's shout and my reply, the aerial combat began. The fundamentals of the Dragonfolk's combat style consist of three elements:

- Claw technique, where the sharp claws on the hands are enveloped in Dragon Aura to slice the opponent to pieces.

- Fang technique, where a clenched fist covered in Dragon Aura strikes the enemy piercing them.

- Wing technique, where wings enveloped in Dragon Aura allow for rapid acceleration, deceleration, and positional changes.

Using wing technique to get behind the opponent, claw technique to weaken them, and fang technique to deliver a fatal blow.

Training your claws, fangs, and wings, and hardening your body.

This is the Dragonfolk's foundational teaching known as the "Claw, Fang, Wing Doctrine."

Of course, I had mastered the basics.

I was particularly skilled at fang technique. My fang technique was so destructive that even Lady Dola deemed it "deadly."

On the other hand, Lady Dola excelled in claw technique. She never clenched her fists. So adept was she in claw techniques that it was said she never fought without using them.

Lady Dola kept circling, aiming her claws at my wings.

In response, I continued my flying style, repeatedly ascending and descending, aiming to counter with my fangs. With my claws, fangs, and wings all imbued with Dragon Aura, I kept a close watch for any opening in Lady Dola's defense. No matter how formidable Lady Dola was, if she attacked carelessly, she would fall prey to my fangs. Thus, Lady Dola couldn't launch a full-on assault and had to rely on claw techniques to gradually wear me down.

Eh? What's that? You think I was strong enough to go toe-to-toe with the Five Dragon Generals back then?

No, it was just training. If Lady Dola had gone all out, it would have been over in an instant.

Even though she was holding back, she used advanced techniques with the intent of defeating me. The battle was one-sided.

Lady Dola's attacks, which flashed like lightning during our exchanges, bypassed my defenses and pierced my body. My claws and fangs were blocked or deflected, unable to even touch Lady Dola's skin.

There was a vast gap in strength between us.

I barely managed to fend off Lady Dola's fierce attacks, making sure not to take a fatal blow. I could withstand one or two of her attacks. But after five or six attacks, protecting my wings became impossible.

As my strength waned, hits became more frequent, and falling was just a matter of time. In fact, that's usually how I lost.

But I wasn't always without a plan.

I constantly thought and tried various strategies. That day, too, when cornered, I took a gamble. I flapped my wings and tried to escape upward. Naturally, Lady Dola pursued.

As she silently chased me, I felt an unfamiliar intensity in her demeanor. She must have thought I was fleeing. Turning one’s back and running away wasn’t something she had taught me.

Lady Dola closed in rapidly. With my back turned, she could clearly see my wings, my weak point, exposed. One strike, and my wings would be ripped through, and I would fall.

If that happened, a lecture from Lady Dola awaited me.

But it didn’t turn out that way. Just as Lady Dola was about to catch up, I suddenly reversed direction at the peak and attacked her instead.

Lady Dola ascending, me descending.

The speed difference was immense, and for just an instant, the abrupt change in relative speed caused Lady Dola to misjudge her aim.

I swung my claws as I passed by Lady Dola's back. I felt the impact in my hand. But at the same time, I felt heat near the base of my wings. I lost control and spiraled down towards the slope.

The battle was over.

I lay on the slope, looking up. Lady Dola was flying in arcs in the sky. It’s customary among the Dragonfolk for the victor of a mock battle to circle in the air a few times. I wondered how Lady Dola would view my tactic of showing her my back. She might scold me. But I was ready to accept it. After all, it was a shallow tactic, and I lost because of it. That’s what I thought, but when Lady Dola came down, she wasn’t angry.

"Though your sudden retreat was surprising, your final move was impressive!"

Lady Dola spoke with a satisfied smile, though blood trickled from her forehead. My strike had split Lady Dola's forehead. I had aimed for her wings, but she shifted her body at the last moment, and the blow landed on her head instead. While wings are a weak point, for the Dragonfolk who are also humanoid, the head is another critical weakness that must be protected. Despite the element of chance, I had managed to strike Lady Dola's weak point.

"There is no one who can land a blow on me in aerial combat, except for Lord Dragon God and the other Five Dragon Generals! In terms of flight technique and combat skill, I'd say you pass!"

I was thrilled.

Lady Dola rarely gave praise. These words were the highest compliment I could hope for. As I basked in the modest joy, Lady Dola continued swiftly.

"Furthermore, there is nothing more I can teach you in terms of knowledge. Your understanding of the Dragon World surpasses that of most Dragonfolk!"

Lady Dola gazed down at me and relaxed her usual stern expression into a smile.

"You are now a full-fledged Dragonfolk. This concludes your training."

She muttered "Well done," and extended her hand to me. I grasped her hand, stood up, and crossed my fists before her, folding my wings. At that moment, I felt an indescribable sense of accomplishment mixed with a hint of unease. Honestly, I thought the training would continue until the day I died. But I suppose where there is a beginning, there is also an end.

"Thank you for everything, Lady Dola."

"No need to thank me. But do not forget to express your gratitude to Lord Dragon God."

"Understood!"

"Now, await orders at home! Your future is in the hands of Lord Dragon God!"

Thus, my training concluded.

I returned home and reported the end of my training to Lady Lunaria.

She greeted the news with a compassionate smile and shared in my joy.

"We must celebrate today," she said, instructing the servants to prepare a feast.

The primary food of Dragonfolk is dragon meat.

In the past, they subsisted on small lizards clinging to rocky surfaces and nuts, but their diet changed after gaining power. They commonly eat Red Dragons, Blue Dragons, and Earth Dragons.

But for a celebration among Dragonfolk, meat is essential.

Special dragon meat, such as that of King Dragons, Black Dragons, and White Dragons, is served. That day, the table was laden with a feast of rare delicacies. I'll never forget the taste of that day.

However, more unforgettable than the flavor was the change in how the servants looked at me from that day forward. To put it simply, I went from being seen as a dog to being seen as a person. Having completed Lady Dola's training, I had become a full-fledged Dragonfolk in their eyes.

I remember sensing a shift within myself as well. The sense of being a mere pet was gone. Though I was still Lord Dragon God’s loyal servant... which isn't to say that I'd changed much. In any case, I began to develop a greater sense of self-awareness and identity.

After that, I awaited Lord Dragon God's return. Lord Dragon God would return to the mansion only once every few months. When he did, he always checked on Lady Lunaria, ensuring her well-being with a few words.

As for me, well, he didn’t ignore me. Lord Dragon God always inquired with Lady Dola about my progress. Lady Dola would report what she had taught me and how well I had grasped it.

Even when no progress was evident, Lady Dola never lied. Lord Dragon God would merely nod and command the training to continue. Once I was able to speak, Lord Dragon God began asking me questions.

The questions were quite ordinary—what I had done that day, what I desired, what I had learned. I answered honestly. There was no reason to lie. Even on days when I had no tangible achievements to report and had learned nothing, I didn’t lie. I had learned from Lady Dola's teachings that lying would be disrespectful.

However, there were things even I couldn’t answer.

Where was I born?

Who were my parents?

Why had I been in a corner of the Demon World...?

I couldn’t answer these questions because I didn’t know.

When I looked down and said I didn't know, Lord Dragon God would merely acknowledge it with a simple "I see." I felt small. I understood that I was special in some way, that my uniqueness was tied to what Lord Dragon God sought... but not knowing myself, I felt inadequate.

Occasionally, Lord Dragon God would examine my body. He would inspect my skin, wings, fangs, claws, and hair. Lord Dragon God never explained the purpose of these examinations, and I never resisted. I owed my life to him and the sanctuary of the Dragon World; even if he intended harm, I was prepared to accept it. Of course, Lord Dragon God never harmed me. Those sessions of reporting and examination came to an end that day.

"Dola, how is Laplace?" Lord Dragon God asked.

"The training is complete. Laplace is now a Dragon Warrior you can be proud of and who can hold his own anywhere," Lady Dola reported.

I was elated when Lady Dola said that to Lord Dragon God. Unconsciously, I clenched my fists and straightened my posture. I wanted to present myself without shame before Lord Dragon God.

"Good. You've done well. What's your assessment of Laplace?"

"Yes! He's extremely exceptional! I recommend assigning him a job!" Lady Dola responded energetically.

"A job, huh," Lord Dragon God murmured, turning to look out the window.

Despite his wisdom, it seemed assigning me a job was not something he had considered. Naturally, I hadn't considered it either.

Of course not.

Who would give a trained dog a person's job? I certainly wouldn't. No matter how much training a dog receives, it remains a dog.

However, I had begun to rethink my stance. I thought that if I was offered a job, I intended to accept it with humility.

"Well then..." Lord Dragon God pondered aloud.

I wondered what kind of job it would be. With bated breath, I waited for the next words, but Lord Dragon God seemed deep in thought. A short while passed—two or three minutes at most.

To me, it felt more like two or three hours.

"Hmm..."

Lord Dragon God, seemingly unable to organize his thoughts, turned his gaze from the window and looked at me.

"Laplace, how do you find the Dragon World?"

Though unrelated to the task at hand, I answered confidently.

"It's a paradise. There's no place better than this."

Hearing my words, Lord Dragon God smiled gently. He chuckled.

"I see."

There was no flattery in my response. For me, this truly was paradise. Meals were provided without a word, and I was taught many things. Lady Dola was strict, but knowing it all contributed to my future, I felt nothing but happiness. Seeing Lord Dragon God's smile, I relaxed a bit too.

Before I knew it, I spoke.

"Um, why did you save me?"

Asking Lord Dragon God a question was considered rude. Lady Dola had taught me as much, but my curiosity got the better of me. Perhaps I needed a concrete answer, whether I would work here or not.

What was I going to work for?

...It was for Lord Dragon God, of course, but I wanted to know the finer details.

"....."

When Lord Dragon God looked at me, his face was unreadably expressionless. Lady Dola tensed, her wings slowly spreading. Realizing my rudeness, I quickly folded my wings and crossed my fists. I was about to apologize, hoping he'd forget my question. But before I could, Lord Dragon God spoke.

"Look."

His gaze turned again to the window.

Outside, the town of Chaos spread out.

Despite being within a cave, it was bright, spacious, and bustling with Dragonfolks flying around.

"Long ago, this was the nest of the Red Dragons."

"...Is that so?"

"Yes, Red Dragons were creatures that lived on the mountainside, much like the Dragonfolk. The Dragonfolk were weak and were merely prey for the Red Dragons."

Lord Dragon God recounted a history of the Dragon World unknown to me. He descended before the Dragonfolk, who hadn't even developed language. He revealed his power to those living in fear of the Red Dragons, and as their leader, he trained them. He discovered the Five Dragon Generals, united the clans, and molded them into an unbeatable force. This was achieved over an unfathomable amount of time. Amid countless corpses, they steadily progressed, making the Dragonfolk rulers of the world.

"...Therefore, the Dragonfolk are like my own children."

With that, Lord Dragon God narrowed his eyes at me.

"I saved you because you are a hybrid of Dragonfolk and Demon. Even if you have only half of Dragonfolk blood in your veins, you are akin to my child."

Never had I felt so proud of my mixed heritage.

Yet, it wasn't the answer I sought.

I wanted to know my usefulness. What purpose did a half-blood like me serve? What had I contributed? I held my tongue, sensing it would be rude to ask further.

...But then again. Lord Dragon God, as dignified as he was, likely saw through my inner turmoil.

"Well, if that were the only reason, it might have been sufficient... But recently, there have been disappearances across all the worlds, including the Dragon World. No one knows why or where they went. If someone among the missing had been transferred to the Demon World and somehow led to your birth, it might provide clues."

"Has my existence yielded any clues?"

"No, there's still a lot we don't know at the moment."

"...I see."

"It's fine. I didn't have high expectations anyway."

Lord Dragon God continued, seemingly gaining interest in the topic.

"Second, I'm trying to improve the deteriorating relations with the Demons. For thousands of years, they've harbored animosity towards the Dragonfolk in one way or another. There are even rumors that saying that 'the Dragon God seeks to annihilate the Demons'... as unfounded as they might be."

"....."

"Raising you, a hybrid of Demon and Dragonfolk blood, could serve as proof that these rumors are false and just a misunderstanding."

Would it really serve as proof?

Having been persecuted in the Demon World, I couldn't see it that way. If anything, I feared I might be a hindrance. Yet, I lacked the courage to voice such thoughts. Being cast out would leave me nowhere to go. Lord Dragon God, Lady Lunaria, the servants, Lady Dola. Now that I had grown close to many people, I couldn't bear the thought of being alone once more.

"The third reason is for my Child,[11] who is soon to be born."

Lord Dragon God then turned to face me. No, more precisely, he looked beyond me, towards where Lady Lunaria likely was.

"My wife, Lunaria, is of the Human race. Hence, our child will be a mix of Human and Dragonfolk."

"....."

"As I mentioned earlier, anyone with Dragonfolk blood is like my child. The Dragonfolk worships me as a God and pledges their loyalty to me."

I nodded at his words.

From the prominent Lady Dola to Lunaria's servants, from the Dragon Warriors at the training grounds, to the children at the training facility, no one despised Lord Dragon God. Everyone revered and respected him.

"However, a child born from a Human might be viewed as different."

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[11] When the Dragon God or Lunaria, or even Laplace in this chapter refer to the "Child" or "Son", they use the term "Miko" (御子). This is different to the "Blessed Child" (神子) Kind of Miko. This would technically be "Honorable Child", but it is used as a term in Christianity to refer to "The Son of God".

I recalled the looks I received when venturing outside. Those peculiar gazes. Even the Dragonfolk were not exempt from this. While it no longer bothered me, a newborn child might be affected.

"Thus, I wished to acclimate them through you. By adopting you, a hybrid with Demon blood, the Dragonfolk might grow accustomed to it."

By having me walk openly among them, the sight of a hybrid would become less unusual, less feared, less shunned.

"I also hope that you two, as fellow half-bloods, will understand each other better. I'm looking forward to that."

This third intention, and the final words, were exactly the answer I had been yearning for.

I was deeply moved.

To think that the one who had taken in someone like me, who was lonely and was needed by no one, did so not out of mere pity.

There was a purpose behind it.

More than that, the God before me had expectations for me. He believed I could become an understanding companion for his child.

Nothing made me happier.

"All of my reasons are calculated and selfish. Are you disappointed?"

"No, quite the opposite."

I made up my mind.

I must become someone who can be of service to Lord Dragon God's Child. To ensure that the half-blood child can live without any hardship, I must do my utmost. Though it's only been a few decades since I started living in the Dragonfolk society, there's still so much I don't understand. However, I realized that if I became useless and was looked down upon by the Dragonfolk, the same could happen to his child, who is also a half-blood. I need to learn from Lady Dola, gain strength, and produce results.

That is what I must do.

"I will surely be of assistance to you, Lord Dragon God!"

"I shall look forward to it."

In that moment, my feeling of gratitude toward Lord Dragon God took on a clear form. I knew now exactly what I had to do. I became determined to try even harder. Of course, I had always tried my best in my own way up until now. But from this day forward, something clearly changed.

Having a clear goal within myself, I no longer felt lost. Rather than just doing something aimlessly, knowing "this is why I'm doing it" gives direction and diversity to the ways one puts in effort and devises strategies.

"Now, Dola."

"Yes!"

Lady Dola, who had been silent in the corner of the room throughout the conversation, responded promptly.

"As for Laplace's work... Do you have any suggestions?"

"In my humble opinion, it would be best to make him one of my subordinates!"

"Isn't that just because you want him?"

"No, absolutely not! I merely believe that if such a noble purpose exists, my place is relatively—"

Looking back on this exchange now, it makes me chuckle a bit.

Even the great Lord Dragon God seemed at a loss for what to do with my work, while Lady Dola, having her selfish desire seen through, was uncharacteristically flustered.

However, Lord Dragon God is the father of all Dragonfolk. Including Lady Dola. Thus, he was willing to indulge her whims to some extent.

"Very well, if you insist that much, so be it."

"Thank you very much!"

And so, I became one of Lady Dola's subordinates.

Have I mentioned Lady Dola's work before?

It was dragon taming.

Chapter 6: Red Dragon Taming

A few days later, Lady Dola took me to a new place.

The destination was on the outskirts of town. The building stood in a section with few houses and was surrounded by dome-shaped walls. Several tall, narrow entrances pierced the walls, and Lady Dola entered through one of them. Naturally, I followed.

"!"

The moment I stepped inside, an unfamiliar animal scent stung my nose. I couldn't help but grimace, though I stopped short of covering my nose. It wasn't because the smell was unpleasant. Rather, it reminded me of the den I had in the Demon World. It was the same sort of smell.

On top of that, from the depths of the building came raucous, screeching noises, adding to the atmosphere. Was it unsettling? No, more than anything, I felt a wave of nostalgia.

"....."

Should I ask where we were, or venture a guess? Before I could decide, Lady Dola turned to me and spoke.

"This is the dragon taming facility."

At her words, I let out a small breath of acknowledgment and looked around. I had heard of this from her classes. The Dragonfolk could fly using their own wings of course, but because they relied on manipulating force fields to do so, their cruising speed wasn't particularly fast. Additionally, the Dragon Aura required for flight was immense, making long-distance travel difficult. It was tiring, too.

Thus, when the Dragonfolk needed to travel far, they rode Red Dragons. Among the dragons, Red Dragons were relatively small, but their range was far greater than that of the Dragonfolk. However, Red Dragons were naturally ferocious creatures. In the past, they were even considered natural predators of the Dragonfolk.

Red dragons, upon seeing the Dragonfolk, would often attack and kill them.

That's why they were subdued and tamed. Captured Red Dragons were taught to recognize the superiority of the Dragonfolk, disciplined so they would not resist, and made usable as mounts.

"From today onward, you will work as one of my subordinates. This will be your workplace."

"Yes, ma’am!"

"Even if you hadn’t become my subordinate, I intended to bring you here eventually. As long as you live in the Dragon World, relationships with dragons will be unavoidable. Learning about their nature will always be to your advantage."

With that, Lady Dola began walking deeper into the building. As we proceeded, I realized the facility was far larger than it appeared from the outside. While walking, I decided to ask her a question that had been on my mind.

"Lady Dola, why did you request for me to become your subordinate?"

"After hearing about your circumstances, I concluded that this work would be the most suitable for you."

"Suitable, you say?"

"Our work is widely appreciated by the Dragonfolk. It is a role that does not garner resentment."

Dragon taming might seem like a mundane job at first glance. However, in the Dragon World, numerous dragons exist as livestock.

Dragon Warriors always ride dragons and fight alongside them. Though considered livestock, dragons are also partners and comrades in battle. You could compare the relationship to that of knights and their horses in the modern world.

Despite being called a "taming facility," this place was involved in much more than just taming. From treating dragons with severe injuries or illnesses to assisting with births, the scope of the work here was extensive.

For the Dragon Warriors, this facility was where they cared for their partners. The Dragon World was a harsh place. Even Red Dragons often came close to death during battles. Because of this, many dragons received care here, and there are many among the Dragonfolk who deeply appreciated the work done here.

Of course, not every severely injured dragon could be saved. However, no one blamed Lady Dola or her staff when that happened. Among the Dragonfolk, it was unthinkable to resent those who have done their best.

For these reasons, dragon taming work was perfect for me.

Though it took time, it was a profession that earned recognition across the entire world. And because it was humble work, it didn’t invite envy.

"Besides, you are incredibly talented. And when someone talented is nurtured, one naturally wishes to keep them close."

"...I am honored by your praise."

Perhaps embarrassed by her compliment, Lady Dola averted her gaze and walked further down the corridor. The narrow hallway eventually opened into a wide passageway. It was large enough for a fully grown Red Dragon to pass through. Along the passageway were multiple cages, each housing a massive, red-scaled reptile curled up and resting.

"These are Red Dragons."

"...They seem surprisingly calm."

Red Dragons were infamous for their ferocity. They were said to attack any living thing that entered their line of sight, devouring anything and everything in their path.

Yet the red dragons before me simply lay still, gazing at me and Lady Dola with disinterested eyes. It was my first time seeing one up close, and it was not at all what I had expected.

"These ones have already been tamed. If you go deeper inside, you’ll find the wilder ones."

"I see... So, what should I do first?"

"A new recruit’s tasks have been decided for ages. Follow me."

I trailed behind Lady Dola as she led me further into the facility. As she had said, the deeper we went, the louder the dragons’ roars became. The flapping of wings resounded in the air, and the cages grew sturdier. The dragons here were more restless, some even growling at me as if to intimidate the unfamiliar presence. However, one sharp glare from Lady Dola was enough to quiet them immediately.

"These dragons have been in training for a few years. They’re still rough around the edges. Once they’ve learned to trust all of the Dragonfolk as their allies, they’ll be moved to the previous section. That area sees more visitors from other Dragonfolk."

It seemed the dragons were gradually moved closer to the outskirts of the facility and closer to the city of Chaos as they progressed in their training.

"The very back holds cages for dragons that have only just begun their training. Those ones are barely different from their wild counterparts."

"So, my job is to train those wild dragons, then?"

I assumed this was the case, as there was nowhere else left to go. However, Lady Dola scolded me.

"Fool! Why would we assign such an important and dangerous task to a newcomer? Follow me."

She led me down a side path between two cages. As we walked, the wild roar of a dragon filled the air. It must have come from an untrained dragon. The sound of such a massive creature reverberated through my core. If you heard it up close, it would likely send shivers down your spine. Even I, who had once hunted beasts in the Demon World, nearly froze in my tracks. Beasts and dragons are on entirely different levels.

Had Lady Dola not been walking ahead of me, I might have stopped in my tracks altogether. And so, Lady Dola saw through my apprehension. She turned back to me, her usual cold, piercing gaze meeting mine.

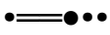
"What's wrong? Are you scared?"

"No, I was just surprised by the suddenness."

"Well, that’s fine. If something like this makes your knees buckle, you're not fit for the job."

I straightened myself up, steeling my resolve. From here on, what awaited me wasn’t just a boring or simple job. Not that I had underestimated it.

Still, I thought it would be safer than fighting something head-on.



The place I was taken to, housed a caged Red Dragon.

Compared to other Red Dragons, this one was significantly smaller.

At the time, I figured it was likely a hatchling or perhaps just an underdeveloped specimen.

The dragon appeared agitated, growling low, snorting heavily, and backing himself against the wall in a defensive posture. It looked like he might lunge at me at any moment. The idea of flying through the skies with him as my steed seemed like a distant dream.

"First, your job is to train this one."

"Understood!"

"At the start, I won’t say anything more. Feel him out for yourself—get a sense of what a dragon really is."

It struck me as unusual since Lady Dola had been so hands-on with everything else, save for the act of flying itself. It felt like she was leaving me to fend for myself this time. Then again, our time as teacher and student was over. Now that I was her subordinate, it was time for me to figure out my own approach.

"If you find it truly impossible, you may kill him."

"Kill him?"

"I'll check back in a year."

With that, Lady Dola swiftly left, leaving only me and the growling dragon behind.

"Grrrrr... Graaaahhh!"

"....."

The dragon stared me down, his hostility clear.

I stood there for a while, thinking.

How could I get this dragon to submit to me?

Should I beat him into submission?

No, this dragon was still small, but he had probably already been beaten down by another Dragonfolk, captured, and brought here. If he hadn’t submitted yet, then it wasn’t just a matter of physical strength. This was a stubborn, defiant creature. Beating him would likely yield no results.

"....."

After some thought, I left the area.

I retraced my steps down the corridor and approached a Dragonfolk who happened to pass by. He gave me a suspicious look as I offered a deep bow.

"From today, I am honored to serve under Lady Dola. My name is Laplace."

"...A newcomer, huh? I'm Gaara."

"Lord Gaara, may I ask you a question?"

Are you thinking that I sought help from a senior?

No, it wasn't like that.

Lady Dola had told me to get a feel of the dragon myself. If I relied on someone else, it would go against her instructions. This was about preparing something I would need to handle things my own way.

"Where can I find the food for the dragons?"

"Ah, go straight down this way, and you'll find it——"

Yes, food.

It might sound simple, but I believed food was the most important thing. For wild creatures, survival revolves around food above all else. Having grown up as a wild child in the Demon World, I knew that better than anyone. My life back then was structured entirely around meals.

So, food came first.

Following Gaara's directions, I made my way to the food storage and received a portion of food from the attendant there. It was a massive piece of meat from another Red Dragon.

Feeding dragon meat to a dragon—this likely stemmed from the Dragonfolk's own diet of dragon meat. But beyond that, it seemed designed to instill a specific mindset. By eating the flesh of its kin, the Red Dragon would realize it was now prey, no longer at the top of the food chain. With the meat in hand, I returned to the Red Dragon. First, I had to fill his belly.

That was essential.

"Graaaaaah!"

However, the dragon glared at me, clutching the massive chunk of meat, and roared furiously. Its attitude seemed to say, "I don't need that. Just leave me alone." Even when I placed the meat before him, the dragon didn't so much as glance at it. He refused my offering outright. Maybe he thought the meat was poisoned.

"...This is a problem."

And just like that, I ran out of ideas.

You might think, “Hey wait, that was only your first attempt!” But back then, that’s all I could manage.

I was just a former wild child from the Demon World, someone who’d only done a little training and studying in the Dragon World. What could you expect me to pull off in front of a dragon?

"Wait."

No, there was one thing.

One experience from my short and impoverished life that stood out vividly.

"I’ll give you a name."

A name.

Yes, a name.

I thought that giving him a name was important to establishing a hierarchy. When I was named, I felt like I’d been given something precious. I also gained a sense of purpose—to live for Lord Dragon God.

That’s why I thought of names.

At the time, it was rare to give dragons individual names. Dragons were just dragons. They might be called Red Dragons or Black Dragons to distinguish their types, but individual designations were almost nonexistent.

"Your name will be..."

But this was my first time naming anything. No ideas came to mind right away, so I found myself hesitating in front of the growling dragon.

"Graugh!"

Maybe the hesitation made me appear weak. The dragon suddenly leapt forward, attempting to attack me.

"...Wait a second."

I easily caught his upper jaw.

Compared to Lady Dola’s precise, calculated movements, the frightened Red Dragon's attack was slow, almost laughably so.

The same went for strength. At the time, thanks to the extensive training, I had begun to grasp how to handle Dragon Aura.

I wasn't yet aware of the immense power that lay dormant within me, but even so, it was enough to stop a smaller dragon in its tracks. No matter how much the dragon struggled, his upper jaw remained fixed in the air as if locked in place.

Even as he tried to free himself by pressing against his lower jaw, he couldn't even manage to make my hand budge, let alone bite it off.

At that moment, a memory likely flashed through the dragon's mind—of the many times during his taming when he had defied the Dragonfolk and was nearly killed. Fearing he would be hurt again; the dragon flapped his wings in an attempt to flee. But he couldn't move.

His body, held in place by his upper jaw, remained still no matter how hard he flapped his wings or twisted himself. The thought of breathing fire crossed his mind, but in his near-frantic state, the dragon couldn't even perform the simple act of inhaling deeply.

Eventually, the dragon exhausted himself and stopped struggling.

At the same time, an idea came to me.

"Saleyakt... Hmm. Your name will be Saleyakt."

When I said that, the dragon slowly lifted his gaze.

Reflected in his eyes was a being with sinister hair, someone who quite literally looked nothing like the other Dragonfolk. That figure stared at the dragon, repeating "Saleyakt" over and over. Of course, the name had no meaning. I just chose it because it sounded good.

"Grrr..."

Red Dragons are ferocious yet intelligent creatures. He seemed to understand right away that this was the name he had been given. And along with that, he also understood that he couldn't overpower me. When I released my grip, Saleyakt immediately moved to a corner of the room.

He backed into the corner, pressing his rear against it, and glared at me with frightened eyes.

"Saleyakt. Food. Eat."

I placed food in front of the now-docile Saleyakt once more.

A massive chunk of dragon meat.

“Grrr… Gah!”

Saleyakt glared at the food, then at me, and roared again. Even knowing he couldn’t win, he still refused to submit. Well, if he had submitted right then and there, he wouldn’t have ended up in a place like this in the first place.

That day, the meat went uneaten. But I didn’t leave either. I began to understand what Lady Dola meant by “feeling the dragon with your own skin.” Wild dragons are temperamental and don’t easily trust the Dragonfolk. They are not like the tamed dragons ridden by the Dragon Warriors. I needed to understand that first… Or so I thought.

And so, I continued my staring contest with Saleyakt. For a long, long time. One day passed, then two. The meat started to rot and smell. When it became clear it was no longer edible, I removed the meat from in front of Saleyakt. I carried it to the disposal site and threw it away.

What do you think I did next?

I brought fresh meat and placed it in front of Saleyakt again.

I know—it was a stupid, stubborn, and repetitive thing to do.

But I couldn’t help it.

It was a task entrusted to me by Lady Dola. I had no intention of giving up until I completed it. That said, I didn’t know any other way. I figured I’d consider different methods after Saleyakt ate the meat. After all, I thought there was no way he wouldn’t eat it eventually. I knew all too well how painful hunger could be.

But Saleyakt didn’t eat.

Three days passed, then four, then five. Still, he refused to eat.

Naturally, I didn’t eat either.

I kept replacing the meat, continuing my staring contest with Saleyakt.

It was almost like we were competing in a fasting match.

I don’t remember how many days passed.

In the end, it was Saleyakt who gave in first.

But not by biting into the meat out of desperation...

No, it collapsed from hunger. His body, pushed to its limit, gave out. He didn't even have the strength to keep his belly off the ground; he just slumped over, completely drained. Even so, his gleaming eyes remained fixed on me. He no longer had the strength to intimidate me...

As for me, I was still fine.

Perhaps it was the Dragonfolk blood in my veins or the influence of my Demon ancestry, but I could go about a hundred days without eating.

Still, I was shocked.

I never imagined he would refuse to eat to the point of near starvation. As someone who knew the pain of hunger, I couldn't believe it. At the same time, I felt a sense of respect for Saleyakt. To refuse to submit so strongly... To value its pride above its life...

If I were ever in a position where I had to betray Lord Dragon God, and eating meat would mean betrayal, I would probably do the same. Better to die than to live in disgrace—that's how he was. Not many can actually follow through with that. I decided to witness his death.

Lady Dola had entrusted me with Saleyakt's training. Her orders were, in essence, Lord Dragon God's orders. I couldn't abandon them. That said, I had been given permission to kill him if necessary. If that was the case, I thought I should at least let him die with his pride intact.

"Farewell, Saleyakt. I won't forget your pride. At the very least, I'll stay by your side."

I said that and sat down next to Saleyakt. Not touching him, but closer than before. There, I faced Saleyakt head-on. For an hour, or maybe two.

I stared at Saleyakt for a while. Saleyakt, in turn, kept glaring at me. I thought that time would stretch on forever. Until the moment death claimed Saleyakt and the light faded from his eyes.

"Grr..."

But then, in a sudden moment—

Saleyakt broke eye contact.

As if he could no longer endure my gaze.

And where he looked next... was at the meat.

He weakly moved his head, bringing his mouth closer to the meat.

He was trying to eat it.

I couldn't know what kind of struggle was happening inside him, but I understood this—he had abandoned his pride and chosen to cling to life.

He wanted to live.

But his strength had already run out. With what little energy he had left, he managed to leave faint teeth marks on the meat, but he couldn't bite through it. I immediately stood up. I grabbed the piece of meat, bit into it, and chewed. The meat was tough and sinewy, but with my strong jaws and sharp teeth, I tore it apart and chewed it thoroughly.

Then, I tossed the softened meat into Saleyakt's mouth. Though weak, Saleyakt managed to chew the softened meat and swallow it. After confirming he could eat, I repeated the process—chewing and feeding him bits of meat. As I chewed, I couldn't help but feel my own hunger. So, every now and then, I swallowed some for myself.

We continued like this until the first piece of meat was gone. I immediately ran to the storage room, brought back more meat, and placed it before him.

By then, Saleyakt had regained a bit of strength. He wasn't able to stand on his own yet, but some energy had returned to his body, and his eyes now glimmered with life as he glared at me. Dragons are resilient creatures, so perhaps they digest quickly. That seemed plausible to me.

Unbothered, I picked up another piece of meat, bit into it, chewed it, and swallowed. Then I pushed the remaining piece toward Saleyakt. It was as if to say: "This is how you eat it. Try it yourself."

Saleyakt already knew how to eat meat. Cautiously, he stretched his neck forward and gave the piece a tentative lick. The taste of good meat, combined with the flavor of my saliva, seemed to ignite his hunger once again. Unable to resist, he finally bit into the meat.

Using his front legs to hold it down, he tore through the tough sinews with his sharp fangs, crunched through the bones, chewed, and swallowed.

Saleyakt ate the dragon meat ravenously. Then, as if suddenly realizing something, he stopped. His gaze shifted to me, sitting on the other side of the meat, watching him. In that moment, Saleyakt carefully pushed the meat toward me with his front paw.

I paused for a few seconds before biting into the meat myself and chewing. I didn't know why, but it felt like I should eat it with him. Chewing slowly, I passed the meat back to Saleyakt. He let out a pleased growl as he ate, then after a few bites, returned the meat to me. This exchange repeated a few times until the meat was gone.

Then, I placed my hand on Saleyakt's head and spoke.

"Saleyakt. I'll raise you."

At that time, Saleyakt couldn't understand the language of the Dragonfolk. But it seemed like he understood the intent behind my words. From that day forward, Saleyakt no longer feared me. This was my first step forward—a monumental one.

Did you know?

Failure might help a person grow, but no matter how much you fail, it won't move you forward.

But success, even just one, will push you ahead.

Chapter 7: The Dragon Tamer

Lady Dola came to inspect the facility about a year later.

That day, I was sitting in Saleyakt's embrace, who was sprawled out on the ground, as if being cradled by the dragon. While we both gnawed on some meat, I was teaching Saleyakt a few words.

"This is... surprising."

Seeing me like that, Lady Dola had a rare look of surprise on her face.

No, perhaps I should say she was astounded. She's not someone who usually shows her emotions so plainly.

"Lady Dola... please forgive my rudeness!"

In response, I immediately tried to stand up, thinking that any disrespect toward her was absolutely unforgivable, my intention was to prepare to bow deeply.

"No, stay as you are," she said, stopping me with a gesture, her gaze fixed intently on Saleyakt.

Her eyes sparkled with curiosity.

"That young dragon has become this docile, has it...?"

"Grrr..."

Under Lady Dola's probing gaze, Saleyakt stood up, lowered his head slightly, and let out a growl, as if in warning.

"Stop it, Saleyakt. This is Lady Dola," I said.

At my words, Saleyakt immediately quieted down. However, the wariness in his eyes didn't completely vanish. I had grown close to Saleyakt.

But that didn't mean he had become a fully tamed and majestic dragon worthy of the Dragonfolk.

It simply meant that Saleyakt no longer feared me.

This timid and overly cautious dragon had deemed me safe but remained the same toward other Dragonfolk. Even Lady Dola's subordinates found this puzzling. Normally, once a dragon submits to one of the Dragonfolk, it grows accustomed to others of their kind as well.

"I'm sorry, Lady Dola. He still doesn't trust anyone other than me..."

"No, on the contrary. To have tamed him this much in just one year is impressive. How did you manage it?"

"I shared meals with him and lounged around together."

"I find it hard to believe that was enough..."

Lady Dola furrowed her brows, still studying Saleyakt closely. Despite her calm demeanor, I could sense that Saleyakt was incredibly tense in her presence. Having spent so much time with him, even reclining together, I could tell. He was scared.

"They're only afraid, that's all. If you give them a name, share meals with them, and help dispel their fear, they'll naturally begin to open their hearts to us."

"...I see. So that's your method?"

"Yes. And I have a proven track record."

By that time, it wasn't just Saleyakt. I'd also managed to tame two other dragons. They were the two dragons who were next to Saleyakt. Both of them were bigger than Saleyakt. Yet, by interacting with them in the same way—eating together and lounging around—they had warmed up to me, grown accustomed to other Dragonfolk, and had already been moved to other enclosures.

Saleyakt was the only one that hadn't adapted. He was the most difficult and temperamental of all the Red Dragons.

"I've heard about your results, but... Hmm..."

Lady Dola seemed to be mulling something over after hearing my report. She was likely grappling with whether what I was saying could possibly be true. If what I claimed was indeed true, then it would challenge the methods that Lady Dola and her people had relied on for thousands of years. And to think it would come from a rookie whom she had personally trained for decades—it wasn't surprising she would have doubts.

Of course, I had no intention of undermining her teachings. But I had managed to do something that was thought impossible.

And what was that?

It was “rehabilitating a failed taming subject.”

That’s right. Saleyakt was a dragon that had failed to be tamed.

Lady Dola’s taming method started with provoking a dragon into attacking, then beating him down to establish dominance. Most dragons would learn from that experience and understand that the Dragonfolk were not to be defied. But occasionally, there were dragons that didn’t respond to this approach. Such dragons would do everything in their power to escape from what they perceived as a terrifying, unbeatable enemy.

In other words, they saw the Dragonfolk as an invincible threat rather than as masters to obey. Once that happened, there was no hope of bringing the dragon into submission. Dragons like that were deemed irredeemable and were put down.

Cruel, you say?

You can only say that because you’re living a peaceful life right now.

A Red Dragon, left to roam freely, would inevitably become a threat. If you let one escape, it could lead to the deaths of many comrades. So, if he won’t submit, you kill him. Then you eat his meat.

Simple as that.

The fact that they’re given a choice to submit in the first place is already more mercy than they deserve.

Still, putting down a failed dragon was always the most disheartening task. All the time and effort poured into him would vanish in an instant. That’s why rookies were assigned to handle failed dragons. They were made to experiment with various methods and learn that some dragons simply wouldn’t submit, no matter what. In the process, rookies would also come to understand the danger of such dragons and the risk of being killed during training. Eventually, they would have to kill the defiant dragon themselves. That way, they’d learn a valuable lesson:

The dragons they see every day were fundamentally different from the wild ones.

However, I had a knack for dealing with such dragons. Perhaps it was because of my experience as a wild child in the Demon World. I could tell that the dragons were simply afraid. So, I used a different approach—one that didn’t rely on beating them down.

That's why, ironically, I never learned what it meant for a dragon to be truly defiant. Even now, I believe that with the right approach, you can connect with any dragon.

"Very well."

Lady Dola, after much deliberation, clapped her hands decisively.

"You will be in charge of the dragons sent here for the time being."

She then issued her orders.

A remarkable person, isn't she?

She chose results over her pride.

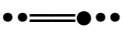
That's something only her loyalty to Lord Dragon God could make possible. Her decisions were always guided by whether it benefited Lord Dragon God and ultimately, the Dragon World.

Even in the Dragon World of the distant past, there weren't many people who could cast aside their pride like that.

"Do your best to tame as many dragons as you can and get them ready for training."

In the end, she never once referred to that room as the "room for failed dragons awaiting execution." Maybe she was being considerate of me.

But knowing her keen intelligence, she must have realized that it was no longer the kind of room it used to be.



From that day, my work got busier.

There weren't many dragons that failed training, but Lady Dola made arrangements to have those that did to be sent over from taming facilities across the Dragon World.

Each one trembled, growled, or tried to flee the moment they saw me. Some were severely injured, on the brink of death, revealing just how harsh the dragon taming methods were.

I couldn't bond with every single dragon either.

No matter how much effort I put in, there were some who just wouldn't open their hearts to me.

For those stubborn cases, Saleyakt was a great help.

Whenever Saleyakt spotted one of these dragons, he would approach and say something to them. What exactly he said, I couldn't understand. Although I taught him the Dragon God language, I never learned Dragon speech from him. But he certainly said something to the dragons.

Sometimes, it wasn't just words—he'd lightly tap them with his tail or gently coil it around them. It was a signal of trust and reassurance. Red Dragons use their tails to calm and soothe others.

At the time, though, I didn't know that. At first, I thought it might be some kind of courtship gesture. Saleyakt was much better at winning over hearts than I was.

Or perhaps I should say he excelled at "winning over dragon hearts."

Well, either way.

After spending just a few days with Saleyakt, the dragons would quickly settle down. Even after they left my care and transitioned to regular training, they remained more obedient than other dragons—and fiercely brave in battle, too, which made them excellent subjects.

Those that resisted taming to the bitter end likely had the potential for such excellence in the first place. Saleyakt and I worked together to tame such dragons and sent them off one after another. Although Saleyakt himself refused to warm up to anyone but me.

Because of all this, my reputation began to rise.

Dragons that no other taming facilities could tame—those were the ones I could handle. And it became apparent that these once-defiant dragons turned out to be superior to those that submitted from the start.

Rumors spread of an outstanding tamer producing exceptional dragons. Even new tamers who came in after me started seeking my advice. Of course, I shared everything I was doing with them. I didn't think of my methods as particularly special or worth hiding, after all.

Most of them didn't achieve the same results as me. Even so, the number of dragons marked for termination decreased, and the number of high-quality dragons increased.

This led to changes in the taming methods.

My methods were incorporated into the official taming guidelines. I wonder how much time had passed by then? A hundred years or so, maybe?

At some point, I became the head of the team responsible for re-training failed dragons. I even had subordinates. Not that the position carried any actual title, though. Still, I had earned respect among the dragon tamers.

"An incredible tamer has appeared."

"He's a half-demon but he's the Dragon God's adopted child, it seems he's also the disciple of Lady Dola."

"Young people should watch and learn from his methods. There's much they can take inspiration from."

I was surprised.

I took pride in returning to Lord Dragon God's residence.

Because I could feel that I was being useful to Lord Dragon God. Every day, I'd share stories with Lord Dragon God, Lady Lunaria, and the servants about the dragons I had trained that day.

It was a truly fulfilling time.

Those were the happiest days of my life. I loved many dragons, and they loved me back. Lady Lunaria and Lord Dragon God accepted me too.

If I were to name the happiest and most fulfilling time in my life, it would undoubtedly be those days.

At that moment, Laplace noticed a change in Rostelina's expression.

Her face—or rather, her physical expression—shifted in a very literal way.

She puffed out her cheeks in a pout.

"What's the matter?"

"When you say those were your happiest and most fulfilling days...does that mean it's different now?"

Right now, Laplace led a modest life.

For a specific purpose, he descended from the mountain a few times a year, but otherwise, he spent his days cooped up in his room, writing.

In other words, it wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say he was living alone with Rostelina.

“Hmm, Well...yes, Rostelina. I hate to say it, but things are different now. I have a mission to fulfill, and that leaves little room for emotions like happiness or joy.”

“.....”

Rostelina felt a wave of sadness wash over her. If he wasn’t happy being with her, then why was she here at all? Maybe she should pack her things and leave tomorrow...

“But, Rostelina.”

“...Yes?”

“As you know, I really don’t like being alone. My current life is filled with anxiety and unease, and if I were by myself, I might be crushed under the weight of it all.”

"!"

"You save me from that, Rostelina. I’m really grateful for your help."

"Yes, Master!"

Rostelina's expression brightened.

Even someone as seemingly useless as her could still contribute to Laplace in some way. Hearing that directly from Laplace himself brought her immense joy.

"But, Master, I have a question."

"What is it, Rostelina?"

"I asked you about how you first met Mister Dragon, but Mister Dragon himself hasn’t actually appeared in your story."

"Huh?"

Laplace scratched his head, running his hand through his mottled hair.

"What are you talking about, Rostelina? He did come up, didn't he?"

"?"

"It's Saleyakt. The Red Dragon that lives behind our house and rules over this mountain—he’s the first dragon I ever met."

"Wait, whaaaaaaat!?"

Rostelina let out a loud gasp.

At the same time, she felt a little embarrassed. Now that he mentioned it, it was obvious. So why had she thought the dragon in the story was someone else? It must have been because she never made the connection.

After all, how could the lazy Red Dragon, always lounging around, endlessly eating, rarely flying, and obedient not just to Laplace but even to her, be the same ferocious, unruly, and grumpy Saleyakt from the story?

"Mister Dragon was Mister Saleyakt!?"

"That's right."

Thinking back, Rostelina recalled that Laplace occasionally referred to the dragon as Saleyakt. Since she'd never paid much attention to the name, the realization left her stunned.

"That Saleyakt is now the leader of the Red Dragons, the King of the Red Dragons, Saleyakt. Although, it seems like he's getting a bit senile these days, though."

As Laplace said this, a grumpy growl echoed from behind the house.

Apparently, he had heard that.

"Hahaha, looks like he's mad."

"Wow... I had no idea Mister Dragon was someone so important!"

"Of course. But that's why, Rostelina, you must always show him proper respect."

"Yes, Master!"

Rostelina responded with enthusiasm. Knowing that the dragon she cared for was such a distinguished figure gave her newfound determination.

"Oh?"

At that moment, Laplace glanced out the window.

A large full moon had risen into the night sky. It seemed that evening had fallen without him noticing.

"Sorry, Rostelina, but I need to step out for a bit. We'll continue this story some other time."

"Yes, Master!"

Rostelina didn’t complain and saw Laplace off. After all, she was an elf.

While she wasn’t as long-lived as Laplace, she still had plenty of time. Even if they were apart for a while, she knew she’d hear the rest of the story someday.

In the meantime, she would make sure to keep the house tidy for his return.

"Yaaawn... But for now, I think I'll just go to bed."

Still, she couldn’t fight off her sleepiness.

To recover energy for the day ahead, Rostelina returned to her bed and drifted off to sleep.

Chapter 8: An Unusual Event

In the unassuming house nestled in the Dragon Roar Mountain. A young girl busily carried items back and forth as always.

Was it water? Meat?

A closer look would reveal she was transporting something different today.

“Phew... there!”

It was books.

She was relocating books from the study to another room, carefully arranging them in an orderly fashion. Perhaps she was up to some mischief?

No, that wasn’t it.

She was air-drying them.

The paper Laplace used for his books was made from dragonhide, renowned for its durability. These books could endure for tens of thousands of years without maintenance. However, prolonged exposure to humidity and insects would inevitably accelerate their decay.

Thus, regular air-drying was necessary.

“Hmm... I guess this much should be enough for today,” she said with a satisfied nod.

But the sheer volume of books in the study was overwhelming. It wasn’t feasible to dry them all in a single day. Instead, she tackled one bookshelf per month, working at a manageable pace.

“Ugh! I’m beat...” Rostelina groaned, stretching her arms and then supporting herself on her aching lower back.

At this moment, an entire bookshelf’s worth of ancient books was now laid out in neat rows in front of Rostelina. These weren’t just old books—they were ancient.

Today, she had chosen volumes from the oldest shelf in the study.

“.....”

As she looked over the books, a sudden curiosity sparked within her.

“I wonder what’s written in these?”

From what Rostelina knew, Laplace spent his time doing three main activities:

Traveling, telling her stories, and writing.

Since Rostelina didn’t always demand his attention, it meant he was writing almost constantly whenever he stayed home. She had observed him for long stretches—writing tirelessly without eating or sleeping. Whatever he was documenting must have been incredibly important.

“Hmm…”

Laplace had never forbidden her from reading the books in the house. In fact, he had once told her that as long as she didn’t damage, discard, or burn them, she could read whatever she liked.

“…But I can’t read them anyway”

The issue lay in the writing itself.

The symbols and script Laplace used were vastly different from the human language Rostelina was familiar with. She could read human language—the widely used language across the continent, even among her own kin.

But these ancient books were written in something else. According to Laplace, they were penned in the Ancient Dragon God Language. Thus, they were indecipherable to her.

Newer books, however, were different. Laplace had written those in human language. Perhaps he thought it would be more accessible for future readers than a lost, ancient language.

Still, why hadn’t he gone back to rewrite the earlier works in human language? Maybe it was just too much trouble.

“…Oh!”

Just then, Rostelina noticed a book sitting at the edge of the row she had organized. The only one written in human language. The title read:

“A Guide to Translating the Ancient Dragon God Language…”

It seemed Laplace, being the wise man he was, had opted to create a dictionary rather than painstakingly rewrite each of his old books.

“With this, I might actually be able to read them!”

Excited, Rostelina grabbed the guidebook and a particularly old, tattered volume she assumed was probably the first to be written. She sat down and pored over the index of the guide, cross-referencing it with the ancient text as she painstakingly deciphered the title.

“Ma... ka... ri. Dragon... General. Hmm, The Mission of the Dragon Generals, Part Thirty-Two.”

After nearly fifteen minutes of effort, she finally pieced it together.

The title read: “The Mission of the Dragon Generals, Part 32.”

Rostelina recognized the term Dragon General. Laplace had mentioned it in his stories—the title given to the five Dragon Kings who served as the trusted subordinates of the Dragon God. Laplace himself had once served under one of them, the Armored Dragon King Dola.

“Huh?”

But a question arose in her mind.

Laplace had been Dola’s subordinate. So why had he written a book about the mission of the Dragon Generals? Was he ordered to do so?

Perhaps the answer lay in the elusive Part One of the series, which should be around somewhere...

“Haaaa...But at this rate, it’ll take me forever just to find it,” she sighed.

That said, just reading aloud the title had already taken quite some time. After all that effort, she had only managed to read about ten words. And there were over a hundred books in front of her. The sheer number of books, combined with the effort required to decode each title, made the task daunting. Reading them all was a monumental challenge, let alone locating one specific volume.

“...Ah!”

At that moment, her sharp ears caught the sound of great wings flapping in the distance. There was only one creature in these mountains that made such a noise approaching the house.

Yes, it was Saleyakt, the Red Dragon who resided behind their house. And riding atop that dragon was none other than her beloved master, Laplace.

Rostelina jumped up and dashed out of the drying room. She sprinted to the front door just in time to see Laplace stepping into the house.

“Welcome back, Master!”

“I’m home, Rostelina. Did you finish the air-drying?”

“Yes!”

“Well done. That’s my girl.”

“Hehehe〜!”

Her face lit up with delight as Laplace patted her head. But then, she remembered the question that had been nagging her.

“Hey, hey, Master, there’s something I was wondering about earlier.”

“Hmm? What is it?” Laplace tilted his head curiously.

Rostelina explained her earlier train of thought.

“All the books on those shelves... You wrote them, didn’t you?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“Then why did you write a book called The Mission of the Dragon Generals? You were Lady Dola’s subordinate, weren’t you? Was it something Lady Dola ordered you to do?”

“Oh, that’s amazing, Rostelina. You can read the Ancient Dragon God language?”

“Hehehe, Rostelina is always growing and learning every day!”

Hiding the fact that she had a guidebook, Rostelina puffed out her modest chest with pride.

“Fufu, but if you can read it, then you understand, don’t you? It’s all written in the book, after all.”

However, shallow lies are quick to unravel.

“Umm... well... sorry. Actually, I only managed to read the title using a translation guide.”

“Hahaha, I figured as much.”

Laughing, Laplace walked deeper into the house.

He placed some jumbled items on the floor—likely brought from the lower realm—and sat down on a chair. He then motioned for Rostelina to sit on a nearby chair as well.

“Let’s have a meal together for once. It’s been a while, and I’ve gotten hungry.”

“Yes, leave it to me, Master!”

Overjoyed, Rostelina enthusiastically began preparing the meal. Cooking for Laplace, who rarely ate, was one of Rostelina’s quiet pleasures.

Whenever Laplace did eat, he was always starving, making him savor every bite with delight.

As Rostelina was leaning forward as she worked over the stove, while she poured all her skill into the meal, Laplace’s voice came from behind her breaking the silence.

“While we eat, I’ll answer your questions.”

His tone carried the weight of reminiscing about distant days long past. It was a voice filled with both joy and regret, as well as a sense of helplessness.

Laplace spoke in a proud voice, yet the tone was tinged with shadows.

“I wrote the book because I am one of the Dragon Generals.”

And so, Laplace began to recount his story.

A tale from long, long ago. From the distant age of myths.

Now, where should I begin?

I suppose from there.

“Laplace.”

One day, when everything was progressing smoothly, Lady Dola called for me. She was always busy flying around, so it was rare for her to visit the taming facilities of Chaos in Dragon Roar Mountain.

However, whenever she came, she would almost always summon me for combat training.

She claimed it was to ensure I wasn't neglecting my daily training... but the truth was that few could match her in a fight.

Fortunately, I was strong enough to serve as her sparring partner.

"Today as well?"

"Today as well. Sorry to trouble you."

On such days, I would delegate my work to my subordinates and accompany Lady Dola to the military training grounds. And then, I would let her beat me to a pulp to her heart's content.

She left me battered every time.

...Even though I could hold my own, I wasn't strong enough to defeat one of the Five Dragon Generals. That said, sparring with Lady Dola regularly allowed me to rapidly improve my skills.

Perhaps it was my ego, but I had become so strong that no ordinary Dragon Warrior could stand a chance against me now.

"...I have something to discuss."

Normally, training ended once I was thoroughly defeated. But that day, Lady Dola spoke with an unusually serious expression. Naturally, I had no reason to refuse her.

We decided to head to the flight training grounds to talk.

When it came to ideal places where Lady Dola and I would have our conversations, the first place that came to mind were either Lord Dragon God's Mansion or this spot. The reason for choosing this place was likely because it was a spot that offered a clear view of Chaos' townscape—a fitting place for our conversation.

"Your recent achievements have been remarkable."

"It's all thanks to your guidance, Lady Dola."

"No, you've done things I never taught you. Even Maxwell commented one day, 'He has done a good job,' teasing me a bit."

"That is an honor."

"If you continue as you are, you will fulfill your duties."

The “duties” in question referred to two of the three objectives laid out by Lord Dragon God: reducing the animosity toward hybrids among the Dragonfolk and demonstrating goodwill towards the Demons.

Indeed, the work of retraining was becoming increasingly important. The taming methods had advanced so much that people were saying the term “re-training” itself would soon become obsolete. What I had accomplished held such profound meaning.

“I have a request for you.”

I was surprised by the word “request.”

After all, Lady Dola had never asked me for anything before.

“Anything you need.”

Naturally, I responded this way.

I lived for the sake of Lord Dragon God, but I also owed much to Lady Dola. And whatever she requested would undoubtedly align with Lord Dragon God’s wishes. That’s why I was ready to comply without hesitation.

“For a while, I want you to take over my duties.”

“Take over… your duties?”

“Yes. In short, I want you to oversee all the taming facilities in the Dragon World.”

“May I ask why?”

“Soon, my mating season will arrive. I will lay eggs.”

Dragonfolk had incredibly long lifespans. They lived for tens of thousands of years—they were essentially immortal. But in exchange, their mating season was brief, occurring only once every few thousand years.

Thus, Dragonfolk who entered their mating season were obligated to participate actively.

“That’s… congratulations.”

“Thank you.”

“Who is your partner?”

People need partners to have children.

Hehe, perhaps this is a stimulating topic for Rostelina.

“Crystal of the Five Dragon Generals. Our mating seasons happened to align… and Lord Dragon God expects strong offspring from us.”

It seemed the Dragon Generals had many children, but unfortunately, I have never met them.

The Dragonfolk had a weak concept of family. The eggs they lay are not warmed by the parents; instead, they are incubated and raised by professional caretakers in the hatching complex. Of course, they knew who their parents were, but the children of the Dragon Generals weren’t treated any differently from others.

Apparently, Lady Dola had already birthed several children. Some had reached adulthood and were working as Dragon Warriors or at taming facilities, while others had perished in battles against dragons.

However, it seems that this would be the first time a child was born of two Dragon Generals. The belief was that the higher the parents’ abilities, the stronger the offspring would be.

A child of two Dragon Generals.

The expectations were high.

“That’s why I want you to take charge of the taming facilities during the egg-laying period. Will you accept?”

The work entrusted to the Five Dragon Generals by Lord Dragon God would now be my responsibility to carry out. Nothing could have been more of an honor. I nearly wept on the spot. It made me realize just how highly Lady Dola regarded me.

“I am honored that you have chosen me.”

Of course, I offered my deepest bow then and there and accepted the mission.

About 30 years had passed since then.

Lady Dola successfully conceived and relocated to a hatching complex located a few tens of kilometers south of Chaos. I accompanied her during the move, and it was quite a fascinating place.

Its appearance was reminiscent of a beehive.

There were numerous private chambers lined up, and the pregnant women would lay their eggs there. The rooms were maintained at a consistent temperature and humidity, ensuring that the eggs would hatch almost on their own. Each chamber then became the hatchling's personal room as well. However, the gestation period for the Dragonfolk is incredibly long. They are, after all, a race that can live for hundreds of thousands of years. The period during which they carry eggs in their wombs spans 50 years, and the incubation period for the eggs is another 50 years.

And as with all species, pregnant women are extraordinarily sensitive and temperamental. For the Dragonfolk women, this sensitivity often manifests as extreme aggression during pregnancy.

That is precisely why they created dedicated facilities, separated from ordinary residential areas, so pregnant women can focus solely on giving birth. This is especially the case for fertilized eggs.

By the time Lady Dola entered the facility, she had become utterly aggressive. She didn't attack everything in sight, but she would lash out over the smallest provocations, venting her anger at anything and anyone nearby. It wasn't rare for me to be injured by Lady Dola, but this was the first time I had seen her act so irrationally violent. I was constantly nursing fresh wounds over the past 30 years.

Still, I managed to carry out Lady Dola's duties without issue. My responsibilities involved inspecting and managing all the taming facilities across the Dragon World.

For these travels, I rode on Saleyakt. That temperamental Red Dragon remained loyal only to me to the very end. From my perspective, taking Saleyakt around to the taming facilities wasn't a bad idea. Saleyakt would converse with other dragons and had a knack for persuading even the most stubborn of them. Wherever we went, he proved indispensable. To be honest, the reason I rose to the position of overseer of the taming facilities was largely thanks to him.

Becoming the overseer naturally spread my name throughout the Dragon World. People began to call me a genius at raising high-quality dragons. With my growing reputation, fewer individuals looked down on me. Some even offered me deep bows of respect as I returned to Lord Dragon God's mansion. Of course, there were still those who disliked me for being a half-demon, but people began acknowledging my abilities.

I'd wake up in the morning and fly to a taming facility. I'd inspect the facility with Saleyakt, handling unruly dragons. Sometimes I'd mount Saleyakt and travel to other towns. The work remained the same no matter where I went. But the faces I encountered would change, and my presence became more widely known.

When I returned to the mansion, Lady Lunaria would be there, and the attendants would serve me a warm meal. Sometimes even Lord Dragon God would join us. I'd recount the day's events to them. It was what you might now call a moment of family bonding.

Those thirty years were truly peaceful. There were no battles, no rigorous training, no urgency—just steadily doing what needed to be done while awaiting the inevitable end. It was a slow and tranquil passage of time.

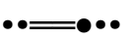
However, such calm days never last forever. Every calm is eventually interrupted by a turning point. Few can walk the same path endlessly. Such a turning point came—for me, or rather, for the entire Dragon World.

A monumental turning point.

It was around the time we received word that Lady Dola's egg-laying was imminent. That the Dragon World was struck by tragic news.

The death of one of the Five Dragon Generals.

The Steel Dragon King, Crystal.



General Crystal was found at the northern edge of the Dragon World, near the nest of King Dragons.[12] His body was discovered in a brutal state—limbs torn apart and his brain completely drained. No matter how resilient the Dragonfolk might be, no one could survive such injuries. By the time he was found, he was already deceased. Around him lay the corpses of his Dragon Guards and several King Dragons.

At first glance, it seemed like he had fought the King Dragons and either lost or reached a draw. But General Crystal was not someone who would ever lose to mere King Dragons. The entire incident was shrouded in mystery. The death of one of the Five Dragon Generals. It's difficult to convey just how significant this was for the Dragon World.

The Five Dragon Generals possessed power second only to Lord Dragon God, they were the strongest warriors of the Dragonfolk. Their strength was unfathomable, even compared to regular members of their kind. If they got serious, they could collapse entire mountains with ease.

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[12] In the beginning, Rifujin called these "King Dragons", but at this point, he changed it to "Gold Dragons" (ゴールドドラゴン). I believe (because of his blog) that the reason was to clarify things as those who haven't read "Subjugation of the King of the King Dragons" wouldn't know that they are essentially, Golden Dragons.

At the time, I was already quite powerful, but I still wouldn't have stood a chance against them. Even as someone who often served as a sparring partner for Lady Dola's training, if she had gone all out, I'd have been reduced to shreds in an instant. That's how powerful the Five Dragon Generals were. And now one of them, Crystal, was dead.

Everyone had the same thought: Who could have done this? And how?

There were very few beings capable of killing a Dragon General. Within the Dragon World, only the other Four Dragon Generals or Lord Dragon God himself could have done it. There was also the possibility of a mutant monster, but... No matter how ferocious or powerful a monster might be, it was hard to believe it could kill a Dragon General. And if such a dangerous monster existed, it was strange that no reports of it had surfaced. Monsters tend to gravitate toward areas teeming with life, after all.

In any case, such a catastrophic event occurred, and Lord Dragon God convened a meeting. The remaining Four Dragon Generals were summoned by Lord Dragon God. When I heard this, I found it somewhat unusual.

To me, Lord Dragon God always seemed like someone who made decisions on his own. However, it was an established custom to hold such meetings when a major crisis arose in the Dragon World.

The meeting took place at Lord Dragon God's Mansion. I was also in attendance, as I was acting as Lady Dola's proxy since she was heavily pregnant and close to laying her egg.

In one of the chambers of Lord Dragon God's mansion, there was a massive stone table with six chairs around it. I had known about this setup, but... seeing the Five Dragon Generals gathered there was nothing short of awe-inspiring. Well, two of them were absent, though.

There was the Dragon General Szilard, with green-silver scales and fragile, ephemeral eyes.

Dragon General Kháos, with black-silver scales and deep, penetrating eyes.

Dragon General Maxwell, with blue-silver scales and resolute, strong eyes.

And finally, the great Lord Dragon God, with silver scales that reflected no other color and eyes that seemed to encompass everything.

Sitting there, I felt completely out of place.

"....."

Until Lord Dragon God spoke, the others would merely stare at the single empty seat. The chair where Crystal should have been seated.

“I can’t believe it... Crystal is dead?”

But the one who broke the silence was Kháos.

I hadn’t interacted much with him, but I had heard he was a rather eccentric man. Under the orders of Lord Dragon God, he had been responsible for crafting the weapons used by the Dragonfolk. Back then, weapons were rudimentary, at best. Swords and spears carved from dragon fangs, or armor pieced together with dragon scales.

Do you think those sound far from crude?

Ah, perhaps by today’s standards, they might seem impressive. But back then, the Dragonfolk trusted their own claws and scales, imbued with Dragon Aura, far more than such tools.

“I can’t imagine Crystal being killed by King Dragons. Or even by some monster. Something about this feels off.”

Maxwell was the one to say this. He was short and frivolous. Most people formed the same impression of Maxwell upon meeting him. Compared to other Dragonfolk, Maxwell was particularly small. On top of that, he always wore a carefree grin and spoke with an unrefined tone.

Many wondered how someone like him could be one of the Five Dragon Generals. There were those who whispered such doubts behind his back, but Lady Dola had once said:

"At the very least, anyone who truly knows Maxwell will not mock him."

That’s because, despite his appearance, Maxwell was capable, diligent, hardworking, and fiercely loyal. He was responsible for exterminating monsters across the Dragon World. The fact that the average Dragonfolk suffered so few casualties from monsters was largely thanks to him.

Maxwell was also the one who personally inspected Crystal’s body at the site. While others in his team concluded it was the work of monsters, Maxwell was the only one who reportedly shook his head and insisted, “That can’t be right.” Because Maxwell understood the strength of the Five Dragon Generals, he couldn’t believe a mere monster had killed Crystal.

“If that’s the case, it must be a demon,” said Szilard, speaking up last.

As the leader of the Five Dragon Generals, Szilard acted as a unifying force for the entire Dragonfolk race.

His duties were numerous, but they primarily involved overseeing matters within the cities. In reality, when Lord Dragon God was absent, he effectively governed the Dragon World on his behalf. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to call him the Dragon World's second-in-command.

Szilard was always calm and composed, with sharp judgment. It was often his role to consolidate the opinions of the Five Dragon Generals and present the optimal solution to Lord Dragon God.

"That's stupid!"

"Impossible!"

But this time, his words caused Maxwell to erupt in anger and Kháos to display clear displeasure. Yet, unperturbed, Szilard calmly glanced at the two of them and continued speaking.

"A King Dragon is out of the question. If a monster capable of killing Crystal existed, it would have already revealed itself and caused widespread damage. The only beings capable of killing Crystal in the Dragon World are Lord Dragon God and us, the Five Dragon Generals."

Szilard cast a fleeting glance toward Lord Dragon God. Though he didn't say it, his look conveyed: If, by some unimaginable chance, Lord Dragon God had a reason to kill Crystal, then regardless of that reason, we would abide by your decision and actions without question.

Lord Dragon God shook his head gravely. There was no way Lord Dragon God would kill Crystal, who was practically his own child. Even for Szilard, the leader of the Five Dragon Generals, saying something like that aloud could have led to Kháos or Maxwell killing him for disrespect.

Of course, I wouldn't have stayed silent either, but unfortunately, I didn't have the right to speak in this meeting. My role was to act as an observer on behalf of Lady Dola, listening to everything without missing a single word and reporting back to her. I couldn't tarnish Lady Dola's honor by making an irresponsible remark that would disrupt the proceedings.

"None of us, of the Five Dragon Generals, would betray the trust of Lord Dragon God. If any of us committed such a betrayal, we would tear off our limbs and crush our own hearts right here and now to apologize to Lord Dragon God. Therefore, the most logical conclusion is that an outsider is responsible."

"So, you're saying it's the demons?"

“The demons have always been hostile toward us. What’s so strange about the idea that they used some scheme to kill Crystal?”

“You think the likes of demons could kill one of the Five Dragon Generals!?”

“Kháos, while we pride ourselves on being the strongest, the Eight Demon Kings are also formidable adversaries. Arrogance could lead to our downfall. Or are you incapable of assessing your opponent’s strength?”

Kháos fell silent at Szilard’s sharp retort.

The Eight Demon Kings could be seen as the demon equivalent of the Five Dragon Generals. Incidentally, one of them was the reason I had once been beaten to a pulp and driven away.

Demons are not as powerful as the Dragonfolk. Compared to Dragonfolk, they were slower and lacked the protection of tough scales. However, they possessed near-immortal endurance and were far more adept at utilizing magic than we were.

In the six worlds, demons were the second most powerful beings. For an average demon, Crystal would have been untouchable. But against one of the Eight Demon Kings, even a member of the Five Dragon Generals couldn’t expect an easy victory. Or at least everyone believed so.

“Still, if that’s the case, it would mean the demons have completed a method to cross the ‘Boundary’ and used it without permission.”

“……”

The "Boundary" refers to a wall-like barrier that separates the worlds. Crossing the Boundary means traveling to another world. Back then, I didn’t fully grasp the implications, but… At the time, people from all the worlds were vanishing mysteriously, and research was being done about the incidents.

Yes, in other words, they were researching teleportation magic.

…Of course, teleportation magic hadn’t been perfected yet. Had it been, its use would undoubtedly have required the approval of the Gods—both from the departing world and the arriving one.

“If they’ve truly acquired a way to cross the Boundary, that would be a grave situation. But for now, we have no way to verify it. Nor do we have the means to find the one who killed Crystal and take revenge…”

Szilard’s words were tinged with bitterness.

After all, whatever had killed Crystal—a being strong enough to eliminate one of the Five Dragon Generals—was no ordinary foe. It meant it was powerful enough to withstand a battle with a thousand troops. Whether it was a monster or a demon, sending an ill-prepared search party would only lead to more casualties.

"Kháos! Leave the vengeance of Crystal to me!"

"If it's that kind of job, then, shouldn't I be the one to take care of it?"

The two Dragon Generals roared with fervor, but the decision wasn't theirs—or even Szilard's—to make. The authority to decide in this meeting always rested with a single man.

"Lord Dragon God, how shall we proceed? Of course, if you entrust it to me, I will undoubtedly track down the culprit and demonstrate the might of the Dragonfolk..."

With that, Szilard turned his gaze toward me. It was directed at me, who had been silently taking notes of the meeting all this time.

"Why not let Laplace handle it?"

The room erupted into murmurs at his suggestion.

"That's stupid! Dola would be one thing, but to let a half-blooded demon take on such a task!?"

The one who roared in protest was Kháos. He glared at me with his deep eyes, baring his teeth, as he yelled at Szilard.

Kháos was, well... a stubborn man.

Once he decided that demons were evil, he would carry that prejudice against them forever.

"Enough of this nonsense! Even if he's Lord Dragon God's adopted son, how could someone like him handle the task of finding the culprit who killed one of the Five Dragon Generals!?"

"You won't know until you let him try."

Szilard accepted the angry outburst as if it were a gentle breeze. Being yelled at by Kháos was likely an everyday occurrence for him. But for me, it was terrifying.

Kháos, the Mad Dragon King, was a truly fearsome person.

"Dola told me that while this man is still inexperienced, he has strength comparable to us Five Dragon Generals. Rather than wasting the time of the Dragon Generals—or worse, Lord Dragon God himself—on searching for a culprit whose existence is uncertain, it's more reasonable to send someone with comparable power."

To be honest, I thought that being called equal to the Five Dragon Generals was a huge overestimation. At the time, I still lacked confidence in myself.

"Even if he finds the culprit, he'll just end up dying in vain!"

"Even so, he's one of us Dragonfolk. At the very least, he might bring back some useful information."

"Bah, this is going nowhere! Maxwell! Say something!"

Kháos, practically spitting fire, turned to Maxwell. He probably thought Maxwell would side with him and oppose the idea. However, Maxwell maintained his usual nonchalant expression.

"...Well, why not? I think it's fine. Let him try."

His words were shockingly casual.

"What!? What the hell are you saying!? That's not like you at all!"

Maxwell was even more of a fighter than Kháos. In situations like this, he was usually the first to charge in and take the lead. That's why Kháos thought he wouldn't yield such an important role. Being the vanguard was a position of honor, after all.

"Do you understand how serious this is!? One of us, Five Dragon Generals, comrades since ancient times, has been killed!"

"Yes, I know. So, Kháos, who do you think will be next?"

"Next, you say...?"

"I was thinking about why Szilard brought this up. If the culprit is working systematically and targeting the Five Dragon Generals, then they'll probably try to take us down one by one."

Kháos seemed to realize what Maxwell was getting at. While he was a fighter, he wasn't stupid. If the culprit's goal was to wipe out the Five Dragon Generals, then the culprit would likely set traps capable of killing even someone like Crystal.

I didn’t know what kind of traps might be used, but they’d certainly be effective against the others as well.

"If the Five Dragon Generals are going to act, it would be best to be in pairs. But with Dola absent, we can’t afford to have two of us leave at the same time. And putting Lord Dragon God himself on the front line is out of the question."

Maxwell proudly presented his reasoning. Whether it was correct or not, Szilard’s wry smile made it obvious. In short, my life was considered expendable. No, perhaps that’s not quite accurate. By then, I had already proven my usefulness. But compared to losing another of the Five Dragon Generals, I was the lesser loss.

"I see. The issue is whether this brat has the strength to carry out the mission..."

"We’ll just have to trust Dola’s word on that."

Maxwell’s conclusion earned a deep nod from Kháos. Their trust in Lady Dola’s judgment was evident without needing to be said.

"Then, what shall we do?"

Still, the decision didn’t rest with Szilard. He deferred to the one person who had remained silent the entire time.

"....."

Lord Dragon God stayed silent for a short moment, with an expressionless face, surveyed the room. His gaze swept across Kháos, Maxwell, Szilard, and finally landed on me.

"Laplace. Can you do it?"

"If it’s your order, I’ll carry it out!"

When Lord Dragon God asked if I could, there was no way I could say no.

To be honest, though, I wasn’t confident.

Chapter 9: Search

After the meeting ended, I hurried to the dragon landing site.

My destination was the hatching complex.

I needed to inform Lady Dola about the meeting's discussions and conclusions... and that I had been assigned the task of tracking down Crystal's murderer. As Lady Dola's representative, I had subordinates now. I could have sent someone else instead. But I wanted to go myself.

The hatching complex was located on a small mountain a short distance from Dragon Roar Mountain. Though "small," it was still taller than any other mountain in this world. Naturally, the security there was extremely tight. It was one of the most important places in the Dragon World.

Inside one of the private rooms, Lady Dola was waiting. Her belly was large and round, unmistakably close to giving birth. And it was equally clear that she was at the peak of her rage. Her private room was far more extravagant than those of the other pregnant women.

Yet every piece of furniture within—desks, tables, even the bed, all which had been custom made—had been completely destroyed. The claw marks left behind looked as if a storm had torn through the place.

The Dragonfolk had the concept of male and female, but unlike humans, they did not have the notion of husband and wife, or marriage in general. They merely came together temporarily for the purpose of bearing offspring. That said, once a child was born, it was common for one to develop special feelings for their mate.

Lady Dola and Crystal.

I didn't know much about Crystal, but it wasn't hard to understand—she had lost both a lover and a comrade-in-arms.

It was impossible to fathom her pain.

"Laplace. What do you want?"

"I've been assigned the task of tracking down Crystal's murderer."

Upon hearing that, Dola glared at me with an intensity that could have pierced through steel.

"...When you find him, report to me first."

I wanted to say "Yes" to those words. But I couldn’t. The toll of pregnancy had drained her strength. If I brought the culprit before her in such a state, there was no telling what would happen to the egg inside her womb.

And no one wanted that.

"I will kill him in your place, Lady Dola."

That’s why I said that.

"I see... Then bring me his head."

Lady Dola didn’t get angry. Perhaps it was because she trusted me.

Maybe I was being conceited, but if it had been anyone else, she would have undoubtedly flown into a rage and insisted on going herself.

In truth, Lady Dola was furious beyond words.

As a fellow Dragon General and as a mate, she had loved him.

"I swear it."

And so, I set out to find Crystal’s murderer.

That said, the Dragon World was vast.

Unimaginably vast.

And I had no experience in leading subordinates. Strictly speaking, the subordinates I had at the time were originally those of Lady Dola. They were dragon trainers, personally entrusted by Lord Dragon God with the crucial duty of "dragon taming." Naturally, they had no knowledge of tracking down a murderer. I couldn’t rely on them. And I was just as inexperienced as they were.

My first search was completely blind. I rode on a Saleyakt, scouting out suspicious areas. There were no clues to follow. I could only trust my instincts and search where I felt the culprit might be. It was a lot like how I once hunted Beasts for food in the Demon World. From an outsider’s perspective, it must have seemed like an incredibly inefficient approach. A few days later, while at the Chaos landing site, someone called out to me.

"Laplace!"

When I turned around, I saw one of the Five Dragon Generals—Maxwell.

I immediately straightened up and saluted him.

"Lord Maxwell! What brings you here?"

"Seems like you're struggling."

"Yes Sir!"

Hearing those words, I stiffened my expression. I was fully aware that I had made no progress after days of searching. If things continued like that, I would just keep spinning my wheels without achieving anything.

"From what I can see, your search methods are sloppy. You won't find anything that way."

I had no choice but to lower my head at his remark. I understood my shortcomings, but I simply lacked the knowledge of how to do it properly.

"I'm not here to scold you. Take these two with you on your mission."

Behind Maxwell stood two burly Dragon Warriors. They were taller than me, broader than me—the very embodiment of Dragonfolk Warriors.

Maxwell himself was small in stature, which made them seem even larger by comparison.

"They're from the Dark Dragon Squad, and they specialize in tracking. Gora, Sklava, introduce yourselves."

At his command, the two warriors shrank slightly before bowing deeply.

"It is an honor to meet you, Lord Laplace."

"Please use us as your hands and feet to accomplish your mission."

I still vividly remember their eyes. They burned with the flames of vengeance. Later, I would learn that they were from the Steel Dragon Clan.

Yes, that was Crystal's clan.

Once, Maxwell had handpicked them from Crystal's unit.

"Are you certain about this?"

I couldn't hide my surprise at Maxwell's offer. At the time, I had barely any direct interactions with him. The Five Dragon Generals were like Gods in the heavens to me—I had no reason to expect his help.

Well, I guess it made sense.

"Yeah. Take them and get searching."

With that, Maxwell turned on his heel and began walking away from the landing site. Before I realized it, I had called out from behind.

"Uhm...!"

"What is it?"

"Why... why did you entrust this to me?"

I was referring to what had happened during the meeting. Maxwell had sided with Szilard's proposal and supported giving me the task.

"I told you back then, didn't I?"

"I'm sure there are some in the Dark Dragon Squad who are more suitable candidates than me..."

But if you think about it, it was a strange situation. Back then, even though I was a promising young warrior, Maxwell's subordinates specialized in hunting monsters. They were skilled not only in tracking but also in combat. There had to be warriors stronger than me at the time. Maxwell, however, simply smiled and answered my doubts.

"...In the Dark Dragon Squad, we use several of the dragons you trained. They're all wild and rough, but each one is fiercely courageous. To be honest, they've been a great help. Most tamed dragons 'lose their fangs', so to speak. Considering that, I can vouch for the quality of your work."

"Besides..." Maxwell continued.

"The one who was killed this time was Crystal—Dola's breeding partner. The one who wants to rampage the most right now is probably Dola. And you're the subordinate she trusts the most. So, if us, from the Five Dragon Generals, can't handle this, you're the one who should."

The Dragon Generals had known Dragon General Crystal for a long time. They wouldn't hesitate to lend their strength for revenge. Unlike the human world today, there was no power struggle among the Five Dragon Generals.

"Find Crystal's killer no matter what. We, the Five Dragon Generals, have fought together for tens of thousands of years. We can't let whoever did this get away with it."

“Yes, sir!”

I nodded, but my emotions were complicated. A feeling close to jealousy swirled within me. Between the Dragon Generals and Lord Dragon God, there was a bond I could never reach.

“If you run into someone beyond your capability, let me know. I’ll fly over and take care of it.”

“Yes, sir!”

“I’m counting on you.”

And so, I was given two companions—Gora and Sklava.

With my two new subordinates, I began searching for Crystal’s killer. Having them by my side drastically improved efficiency. After all, they possessed knowledge of how to track someone within the vast Dragon World. That said, investigation methods haven’t changed much between then and now.

First, we visited the crime scene and conducted an inspection. We gathered clues and, when necessary, obtained eyewitness testimonies to gradually trace the perpetrator’s movements.

Of course, it wasn’t that simple. If the culprit could be found so easily, Maxwell’s investigation would have already uncovered them. As the commander of a monster-hunting and extermination squad, Maxwell excelled at this kind of work. My two subordinates had received Maxwell’s investigation reports. They had also participated in the crime scene inspection, so they knew what evidence had been left behind. Yet, when we put our findings together, there was only one conclusion—

We had no idea.

We had to find someone even Maxwell couldn’t. The challenge was immense. Dividing up the tasks, we searched for any traces and conducted interviews. It wasn’t that I distrusted Maxwell’s investigation. Rather, I hoped a fresh approach might reveal something new. But, of course, we found nothing. There should have been a conspicuous presence capable of killing Crystal. And yet, we found nothing. It truly seemed as if Crystal had simply perished in a duel against King Dragons.

At that point, I changed my perspective. This wasn’t the work of a monster. It had to be a deliberate, planned crime. Someone had orchestrated the murder and erased their tracks, leaving no evidence behind.

What? You think that's an obvious conclusion?

Don't be so harsh—I had never conducted an investigation before.

Regardless, I decided to change my approach. Rather than chasing the culprit, I would trace Crystal's movements.

What had he been doing?

Why had he gone to the King Dragons' nest?

What had he planned to do there?

Did anyone have a reason to target him?

I thoroughly investigated these questions. And I found something interesting. Crystal had been researching teleportation magic under the orders of Lord Dragon God.

Teleportation magic was a technique that allowed one to cross the boundaries between worlds—in other words, a technique for traveling to another world. At the time, it was believed that ordinary beings could not cross between worlds. Traveling between worlds required an immense amount of energy, something only Gods possessed. Thus, inter-world travel was considered a privilege granted only to the Gods.

However, the Gods of each world had their subordinates research teleportation magic. Why? Because back then, people would mysteriously vanish—they had been "spirited away."

...Wait, had I mentioned this already?

Research eventually revealed that the true nature of these abductions was actually instances of "teleportation" to another world. That's why the Gods ordered their subordinates to study teleportation magic. They wanted to uncover the cause of these accidental transfers. And in the Dragon World, the one who had been tasked with this mission was Crystal.

However, for some reason, this was not widely known. Perhaps they had kept it secret to avoid unnecessary panic over the rare but frightening phenomenon of being spirited away. Or maybe they feared that revealing this research would lead to its misuse. After all, Kháos and the Mad Dragon Clan harbored a deep hatred for the Demons.

If they discovered a way to invade another world, they might start a war on the Demons. And as I pondered this, an idea struck me—

What if Kháos had killed Crystal?

Crystal had been researching teleportation magic. Kháos might have sought to use it for an attack on the Demons. He could have demanded the technique from Crystal, only to be refused. A heated argument escalated, and Kháos killed him...

That story made too much sense.

So, I flew straight to Kháos' domain.

Kháos' workshop was located at the far western edge of the land. I remember it being much hotter than Chaos, as it was close to a volcanic zone. The workshop produced weapons using high-quality materials sourced from dragons and precious minerals from the mountains.

Swords, spears, shields and armors. Though the Dragonfolk primarily fought with their claws, they didn't always fight barehanded. Sometimes, such weapons are used to challenge powerful foes.

Kháos' armaments were likely designed with the assumption that they would be used to fight other races.

Yes, for example, Demons.

"LaPlace, have you found anything?"

"We're currently investigating."

"I see... Well, you need rest too. Take it easy for now."

Despite my deep suspicions, Kháos welcomed me warmly.

Even though, during the meeting, he had glared at me, a half-dragon, half-demon. Rather than treating me coldly, Kháos allowed me to see every corner of his workshop.

"Lord Kháos, may I ask you some questions? If that's ok with you."

Without hesitation, I started questioning him. One might even call it an interrogation. Looking back now, I feel my face flush with embarrassment. Just how disrespectful had I been to one of the Five Dragon Generals.

"What is it?"

"When Lord Crystal was killed, where were you, and what were you doing?"

"I was here, forging weapons to offer to Lord Dragon God Look, that one there. I named it The God Sword.[13] It's a sword capable of withstanding the immense power of Lord Dragon God. Of course, Lord Dragon God probably has no need for it, but when his child is born, I plan to present it as a tribute."

"I see..."

"Is there anything else you wish to ask?"

Now that I think about it, my actions clearly showed I suspected Kháos. And yet, Kháos never complained. Not once did he show displeasure. As if to say, 'If it's necessary for the investigation, I would gladly cooperate,' he openly shared everything with me. Even information that was likely classified. And in the end, he said this:

"LaPlace, if you need anything, just say the word. During the meeting, I let my emotions take over and spoke harshly, but I never doubted your loyalty to Lord Dragon God. Forgive me."

Finally, Kháos said that and patted me on the shoulder.

"We must avenge Crystal. If the task proves too much for you, come to me. I'll help you—discreetly."

I was ashamed of myself. I had forgotten the anger Kháos had displayed in that meeting. My suspicions had been an insult to the very pride and camaraderie of the Five Dragon Generals.

"I swear it."

With those final words, I bowed deeply and left.

From then on, I traveled all over. North, south, west, east. I retraced Crystal's steps over the past few decades, searching for anything that might serve as a clue. But I found nothing.

There was no sign of anything unusual in Crystal's actions.

Like the other Five Dragon Generals, he had earned great respect and conducted himself accordingly.

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[13] In this point, Rifujin called it "The Dragon God Sword" (龍神刀= Ryūjin Katana), but in a later chapter, he called it "The God Sword" (神刀= Jintō). To keep things consistent, I will use "The God Sword" here.

He was the very ideal of a Dragon Warrior.

Who could have possibly wanted to kill him? Could it have been a demon from another world? Even if it were a demon, surviving in the Dragon World would be nearly impossible. Even if he had killed him and fled immediately, escaping without leaving any trace would have been an incredible feat.

I was at a loss.

I never expected to come up empty-handed for so long. At the same time, I was growing impatient. Once a year, I returned to Chaos to report to Lord Dragon God and Szilard, but I had nothing useful to show for it.

If I had even the smallest lead, I could have remained composed. But reporting "nothing" over and over only made my frustration worse.

I had been entrusted with this by Lord Dragon God

I had given my word to Lady Dola.

And yet, I was accomplishing nothing—just losing time. How could I stay calm? I searched the entire Dragon World like a madman. I ventured into dangerous places, desperate for any clue. A Red Dragon’s nest, a Blue Dragon’s nest, a Black Dragon’s nest, a King Dragons’ nest, an Earth Dragon’s nest. I went to all kind of places, investigating every lead.

I slaughtered any dragon that got in my way. Riding on Saleyakt, I scoured the Dragon World with my two subordinates. I must have looked possessed.

After ten years of investigation, there was no one in the Dragon World who didn’t know my name.

Not as a capable dragon tamer.

But as an incompetent half-breed who failed to meet Lord Dragon God's expectations. It was a humiliating reputation, but I accepted it.

Because it was the truth.

I couldn’t fulfill Lord Dragon God’s expectations. I couldn’t avenge the Five Dragon Generals. But I didn’t care about my own humiliation. I just wanted to meet Lord Dragon God’s expectations. I wanted to bring justice to the Five Dragon Generals. That was all that mattered.

For days, I flew without rest. I searched. I investigated. Day after day, night after night. Saleyakt endured it all alongside me.

But one day, at last, exhaustion caught up to us.

We stopped to rest in one of the countless caves scattered throughout the Dragon World. That night, I curled up against Saleyakt's tail, staring at the flickering flames of a campfire. I watched them dance, without moving a muscle. I was exhausted. So were my two subordinates.

We never spoke of giving up, but the thought weighed on all of us—perhaps there was simply nothing left to find. Even Saleyakt, despite not understanding our words, seemed drained. And then, it happened...

Oh, I remember it well.

How could I ever forget? There's no way I could forget that moment.

It was that very night. My two subordinates had fallen asleep. I was dozing off, wrapped in Saleyakt's tail.

That was our first encounter.

Ahh, if only I had been stronger back then. If only I could return to that moment...

No, even then, nothing would have changed. Back then, he had been quite careless—but he was still cautious.

Even if I had suddenly bared my fangs, he would have slipped away effortlessly. But still, it's frustrating. He had been right there, within my reach... Ah, how frustrating...

Forgive me.

It seems I have gotten a little too worked up. I need to calm down. This is just an old story—no matter how much I recall it; the past cannot be changed. Yes, it was at the entrance of the cave that he appeared.

I can still clearly remember the first words he said.

"Hey!"

With an almost unsettling casualness, he raised one hand and said—

"You seem to be in trouble. Want a little help?"

Wearing a smile that seemed far too kind.

Chapter 10: The Advice of the God of the Humans

What did that guy look like?

I can't remember.

I do recall the smile on his face, but his actual features escape me. But I can't remember his face at all... But I know for certain that he was there. A man with a face that left no impression stood before me.

It was shocking.

I hadn’t sensed his presence at all. Even Saleyakt, with his massive frame, had risen to his feet and was growling in warning at the intruder. My two subordinates were also staring at him, wide-eyed in astonishment.

"Who are you...?"

"Me? I’m the Human God. The God of the Human World," he declared.

The God of the Human World.

Of course, I was well aware that six Gods existed in this world. I had also heard about the Human God from Lord Dragon God. The Human God first appeared in the Dragon World during an age so ancient it was practically myth to me. It was back when Lord Dragon God and the Dragonfolk were attempting to seize dominion of the world from the dragons. At that time, the Human God arrived in the Dragon World and made a proposal to Lord Dragon God. A conference between the Gods—a gathering for exchanging knowledge and information.

The Human world had the most advanced civilization of all the worlds. Among the six worlds, Humans had the shortest lifespans, but precisely because of that, their civilization developed at a rapid pace. They frequently produced exceptional individuals and groundbreaking ideas. Thus, the knowledge the Human God shared in these meetings proved invaluable to all worlds.

It was in the first conference, held in the Human World, that Lord Dragon God learned about the existence of "words" and "writing." The Dragonfolk, who had neither language nor script, had their first taste of civilization thanks to the Human God.

But that wasn’t all.

The Human God generously shared knowledge that had been useful in his world. How to build cities, how to manage large groups of people, strategies for fighting in formations, and even the concept of livestock. None of these were ideas the Dragonfolk would have conceived on their own. Thus, Lord Dragon God placed great trust in the Human God. He respected him as a leader among the Gods.

"My deepest apologies!"

And so, I immediately straightened my posture. I stood up and prepared to bow with the utmost respect. I couldn't afford to show the slightest disrespect to someone on equal footing—or perhaps even superior—to Lord Dragon God.

"Oh no, there's no need for that," the Human God said, casually placing a hand on my shoulder and nudging me to sit back down.

"I just dropped by because I have a small errand for the Dragon God."

What had this man come here for? Just as the thought crossed my mind, as if he was reading it, he continued speaking.

"I hear you're searching for the one who killed one of the Five Dragon Generals."

"How do you know that!?"

"I just told you, didn't I? I had business with the Dragon God. Your name came up. He's terribly, terribly worried about you."

"....."

Those words pierced my heart.

For years, I had made no progress, and it weighed heavily on me. Hearing that he wasn't angry, but rather concerned, nearly tore me apart inside. How utterly powerless and insignificant I was... I felt like crying.

"I've known him for a long time. So, if he's troubled over something, I figured I'd lend a hand."

"...! Do you know where the culprit is!?"

I blurted the question out, but the Human God only chuckled as I bit the bait.

"No. Just like the Dragon God, I'm not omniscient nor omnipotent. I don't know that much. But I do have knowledge I've gained from the other Gods. For example, about a certain ability you possess."

"An ability...?"

"Yes. As a half-blood of Demon and Dragonfolk, you have a unique power."

The Human God circled around in front of me, as if savoring the moment. His face was smiling. It was a smile that made me feel reassured. But you should remember this—Just because someone smiles to reassure you, doesn't mean they have good intentions. People who deceive others also wear reassuring smiles. Of course, back then, I didn't understand any of that. I simply felt relieved. I trusted him.

"Tell me, have you ever been able to sense the actions of an enemy behind you? Or detect the presence of someone who isn't even there?"

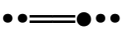
Now that he mentioned it, I had. When I rode Saleyakt into battle against dragons, there were times when I could perceive the movements of enemies behind me. Not only that. Even back in the Demon World, I had shown glimpses of such an ability. Otherwise, surviving alone in a word filled with deadly Beasts would have been impossible.

"That's the power of your Demon Eye. Activate the power hidden in the inner part of your eye and try to take a good, long look at the scene again. You'll surely find something... I'm sure of it... Fufufu..."

The Human God laughed as he slowly vanished. In reality, he simply walked out of the cave. But somehow, it felt like he had disappeared. I remained rooted in place, merely watching as he left.

"....."

Before I knew it, he was gone. Saleyakt and my two subordinates were curled up, sound asleep. As if nothing had happened. I, too, felt as if I had just awoken from a dream. But I knew that the Gods occasionally wielded mysterious powers. This sort of thing was within the realm of possibility. So, I didn't dismiss what had just happened as a mere dream. I decided to test this "Demon Eye" of mine.



There was no doubt that I was skeptical. Under normal circumstances, I likely would have been far more doubtful. I wasn't the type to waste time believing in some nonexistent power. But I was desperate. I needed to do something—anything. I was grasping at straws.

So I headed straight for the King Dragons' nest. The place where Crystal had died was now completely empty, returning to being nothing more than a King Dragons' nest. The cave was a rusty red, with numerous ferns hanging from the ceiling. King Dragons were carnivorous, but when prey was scarce, they would eat those ferns to stave off hunger. In that place, I consciously focused on the area behind my eye.

"...This is..."

Sure enough, it was exactly as the Human God had said. I could clearly sense something in the back of my eye. Something I had always used unconsciously was undeniably there. It's difficult to explain this feeling.

Well... yeah. It's like an internal organ. You don't usually think about your heartbeat, but if you focus on it, you can feel it, right? However, unlike an organ, my Demon Eye was something I could control with my will. Until now, I hadn't even realized it existed.

As if the words of the Human God in that cave had been a trigger, the power I had been using unconsciously until then was now unlocked. I could activate my Demon Eye by focusing on the back of my eye.

Mine was a bit different from the countless Demon Eyes that exist in the world today, but still, if I had to name it, it was undoubtedly a Demon Eye. And in that eye, I could clearly see the traces.

The place where Crystal's corpse had been, the place where the King Dragons' corpses had been. The presence of Maxwell, who had investigated, and that of his subordinates. And floating in the air, something else—something completely different from the rest. I could see it. Clearly. It wasn't my imagination. With strong conviction, I pursued that presence.

I leapt onto Saleyakt and soared through the vast Dragon World, cutting through the wind. I flew over six mountains and seven valleys. The presence continued in a straight line—I never lost my way. Without a shred of doubt, I was certain that this was the culprit. Call it reckless if you want, but I couldn't help it. Up until now, I had found no clues at all, and now I had one. Everyone wants to believe that the things they find and the conclusions they reach are special. I flew like an arrow.

Eventually, I arrived at a mountain. A nameless mountain, with no particularly distinguishing features. It wasn't very tall, nor was it home to any notable dragons. There were no remarkable caves halfway up. It was just another mountain in the Dragon World. And yet, there was a cave halfway up this mountain.

Yes, there was a cave.

Even though there shouldn’t have been. Had it always been there? Or had someone dug it? I judged it to be the latter. The entrance bore marks as if something sharp had gouged into it. It had an artificial presence to it.

"....."

I hesitated for a few seconds. The culprit behind the murder of one of the Five Dragon Generals might be inside. But could I handle him?

Maybe not.

Wouldn’t it be better to return and call for backup from one of the Five Dragon Generals? But I quickly shook my head. At this point, I already felt like I had failed. Failed to achieve "any results at all." The only way to redeem this failure was to take the culprit’s head and bring it back.

That’s what I thought.

"Gora, Sklava... We’re going in."

"Yes Sir!"

"Leave the rearguard to me."

And so, I left Saleyakt at the entrance and, with my two subordinates, we charged inside. Looking back, I should have sent one of them back to Chaos to call for reinforcements from the Five Dragon Generals. But they must have been thinking the same way I was.

Without hesitation, they followed me. The cave was narrow and damp. The hard green stones were covered in moss, making it seem as though no living creature had been here for a long time. But it was obvious—someone had been here. There were traces. No, to call them "traces" would be an understatement. A bed made of tree branches and small lizard bones scattered about.

"He’s here. Stay alert."

"Yes, sir!"

I was certain the culprit was here. The presence lingering around the bed was the same as the one in the King Dragons’ nest. However, despite sensing his presence, I couldn’t see him. Was he out at the moment? Or...

"!?"

"Gwah!"

At that moment, a voice rang out from behind me. I spun around instinctively, just in time to see Sklava's head twisted off, his body collapsing while vomiting blood. It happened too suddenly. I had let my guard down. All because I had my Demon Eye.

"What the hell is this thing...!?"

The figure darted through the darkness, lunging at Gora. I wasn't about to just stand and watch. I immediately threw myself between them, grabbed his arm, and hurled it into the solid rock wall. As light from the entrance illuminated him, his form was revealed. I was shocked.

Dark skin. Four arms. And red eyes. It was definitely not a Dragonfolk.

It was a Demon.

I recognized it instantly. After all, he was from a race I had seen many times before and even admired. But what shocked me wasn't that it was a Demon. It was that my Demon Eye couldn't see him at all. Was it due to some power or simply due to its nature? Fortunately, I was able to track his traces... his footprints and scent. But I couldn't actually see him with my eye.

"_____!"

It shouted something at me. It was in the Demon God language. But I didn't understand it. I had never learned the Demon God language. Still, I could feel its hostility.

"This bastard is Lord Crystal and Sklava's killer! Gora, cover me!"

"Yes!"

I concluded that this creature was the one who had murdered Crystal. I extended my claws, infused them with Dragon Aura, and took my stance. Right hand forward, left hand near my chest. The same stance as Lady Dola.

"_____!"

The demon shouted something again, but he must have quickly realized that I was ready to fight. He immediately readjusted his posture and glared at me. I slowly closed the distance, while Gora covered my blind spot.

The exit was behind us. He had no way to escape.

"_____!"

The demon let out a cry and kicked off the ground.

The battle had begun.

It was an intense fight. He was strong.

Even when I slashed him to pieces with my claws, even when I sank my fangs into his body, he regenerated and came back at me. Of course, it wasn't like I was overwhelming him either. I was struck down countless times, coughing up blood again and again. I didn't think I could win.

At one point, I even considered retreating to call for reinforcements from the Five Dragon Generals. It would have been the surest and smartest choice. Lady Dola had never taught me to turn my back and run... but it would have only been a temporary withdrawal to complete the mission. Still, maybe that hesitant thought was my mistake.

Gora was killed.

His heart was pierced right through. It was just a moment of carelessness. It happened right before I was about to say the words "let's fall back." I'll never forget the look on Gora's face as he died, it was full of regret. Having lost both of my subordinates, retreat was no longer an option.

I kept fighting.

There was regret. I hadn't known Gora and Sklava for long, but we had traveled together, shared meals, and endured hardships side by side. I had to avenge them. There was also my pride. If I ran away now, what was the point of all these years of chasing down this enemy? But slowly, I was being cornered. I mean, think about it—

How was I supposed to defeat something that seemed immortal? No matter how many times I attacked, he kept regenerating. As for me, I couldn't regenerate. Of course I was being pushed to my limits. Even if I was stronger than him, that didn't matter. The only reason I hadn't lost yet was my immense stamina.

The battle raged on for ten days. The cave collapsed, the mountain crumbled into ruins, yet still, there was no victor. Both of us were at our breaking point. But surprisingly, he was struggling just as much as I was. Most likely, he hadn't eaten properly for a long time.

If I had looked more closely, I would've noticed how emaciated he was.

He had wings on its back and could fly, but not as well as a Dragonfolk. He probably hadn't been able to travel far in search of prey. Even the strongest beings will weaken after fighting for ten days in that state.

On the tenth day, I noticed that his regeneration was slowing. And he must have realized it, too. In his eyes, I saw pure fear—the desperate will to survive. But I was in an even worse state, battered and covered in wounds, barely standing. I had almost no strength left. If this continued, I was going to lose. Just by a sliver, but I would fall first. And if I lost, he would devour me, Gora, and Sklava, restoring his strength.

I wouldn't just fail to avenge Crystal—I'd end up giving power to the enemy. That wasn't the mission I had accepted. I had to fulfill Lady Dola's will. I couldn't let the efforts of the Five Dragon Generals go to waste. I had to live up to Lord Dragon God's expectations.

"UOOOOAAAAAAH!"

So, I used the last of my strength.

Something welled up from the depths of my belly. Right beneath my heart, deep in my gut. It was an overwhelming energy, like a seething mass of molten magma. Maybe this was thanks to unlocking my Demon Eye. And then... I unleashed it.

I don't remember exactly how I did it.

Even if you asked me to do it again, I doubt I ever could.

I just knew I could do it. I knew I couldn't lose.

So I let it all out.

And then... the mountain vanished.

When I came to, both of us had lost consciousness.

We were lying on a rock shelf on the neighboring mountain.

I had detonated my Dragon Aura. A self-destructive move.

But the blast hadn't just obliterated the mountain—it had taken my opponent down as well. We had struck each other down. And as we fell unconscious, losing our footing, Saleyakt must have caught us.

Saleyakt was my savior.

The moment I woke up, I bound my opponent's arms and legs with ropes made from dragon bone and leather. Honestly, the fact that I woke up before he did was nothing short of pure luck...

But one way or another— I had captured Crystal's killer.

The mission was complete.

Chapter 11: The Demon Dragon King

I shackled the culprit and transported him to Dragon Roar Mountain. He regained consciousness along the way, but escape was impossible. After all, these were shackles designed to bind Dragonfolk. They suppress strength and disperse power. Even a Demon would have no choice but to stay quiet when bound by such restraints.

Perhaps he had already given up, or maybe he was consumed by some other emotion. I wouldn't know. I was too overjoyed by the success of my mission. Either way, it was a triumphant return.

"Laplace!"

The one who greeted me upon my triumphant return was Szilard. Dragon Roar Mountain has eight entrances, and I was about to enter through one of the largest. Szilard stood there, accompanied by a large group of Dragon Warriors. No, that's not quite right.

Whenever someone approached an entrance without prior notice, Szilard would gather Dragon Warriors and head out for security. Protecting Dragon Roar Mountain was one of his duties. Since I had been out on a guerilla mission, I naturally hadn't sent word of my return. And so, I found myself greeted by Szilard. Much like the time when Lord Dragon God himself brought me here.

"You did it!?"

He was overwhelmed with surprise, then he looked at me, at Saleyakt, and at the one I had captured.

"Yes!"

"Well done!"

He greeted me with joy on his face. It was a true welcome. The other Dragon Warriors, upon hearing that we had captured the one who killed one of the Five Dragon Generals, erupted in celebration. I can hardly recall another time when so many Dragon Warriors cheered with such enthusiasm.

"Laplace, you've done well."

"Thank you, Lord Szilard. However... we still don't know how this one entered the Dragon World, or how he managed to kill Lord Crystal..."

I was certain he was the culprit.

But when I thought about it, there was no definitive proof. No evidence that he was the one. As that realization set in, my words faltered. I had returned in triumph, but what if I had brought back someone completely unrelated?

Though rare, teleportation incidents happen not just in the Dragon World, but in other worlds as well. What if the one I attacked was nothing more than a victim of such an incident...?

"I see... Ah, that's right. You can only speak in Dragon God language, can't you? Very well, I shall conduct the interrogation myself."

"Please do."

I handed him over with a nervous heart. I had spent so much time and effort—I even ended up blowing up an entire mountain—all just to capture this one individual. What if, after all that, he was the wrong person?

But I was exhausted. Even without proof, I was convinced he was the one. And I was relieved to entrust him to someone I could trust. Honestly, though it's embarrassing to admit, I just wanted to go home and rest. For now, the mission was complete. If he wasn't the right one, then so be it.

I just wanted to sleep.

And so, the man was taken away by the Dragon Warriors. His face was filled with nothing but anxiety. I almost thought he was looking to me for help.

Perhaps, in the midst of battle, a bond had formed between us. I didn't feel that way, but... there are Demons who forge friendships through battle.

And that was the last time I ever saw him.

For three days and three nights, I slept.

When I awoke, I ate.

Food always tastes better when eaten by Lady Lunaria's side. Or perhaps it was because it was a meal after a mission accomplished.

Afterward, I first went to see Maxwell. He was in the Dragon Roar Mountain training grounds, searching for promising young recruits. I told him that I had captured the culprit. And at the same time, that I had lost valuable subordinates. He responded by patting my shoulder and saying, "I see. But if you've completed your mission, then they can rest in peace."

Next, I went to see Lady Dola.

Honestly, I expected to be scolded and yelled at.

She had ordered me to bring back the culprit's head, but I had failed to do so. The culprit's head remained attached to his body when I handed him over to Szilard. With anxiety and resolve in my heart, I stepped into Lady Dola's chamber. And I was shocked.

Her stomach had shrunk significantly. She had successfully laid her egg. She was as calm as the still ocean. Perhaps because the birth had already passed. I walked up to her and bowed deeply.

"The aftermath of your battle reached even here."

Lady Dola said in a quiet voice.

"I immediately knew you were fighting. Perhaps that's why... I suddenly went into labor."

As she spoke, she gently stroked the egg beside her. Dragonfolk eggs are about the same size as a human infant.

The pain of giving birth is not much different.

"It was a safe birth, but it was premature. The child may be a bit underdeveloped."

Despite saying that, her touch was full of affection. I was surprised to see that even the fierce Lady Dola could show such an expression. A thought I knew was highly disrespectful.

But until now, I had only seen a Lady Dola who was strong and fiercely loyal. Then again, perhaps that itself was her way to show kindness. But that was a thought for another time.

"So, how did it go?"

"Yes! I located a likely suspect and captured him after a battle!"

"I see... Well done. Though, I had already heard as much before you arrived."

Most likely, Maxwell had reported it in advance. Even if the Dragonfolk live at a slower pace, three days is more than enough time for word to spread. Maxwell had humored me by letting me tell him myself—Lady Dola, on the other hand, was not so accommodating.

That kind of bluntness was just like her.

"I apologize for the delayed report."

"Think nothing of it. I heard you collapsed into sleep upon your return. Anyone who exhausts their Dragon Aura would do the same. It must have been a fierce battle."

"...And also, I wasn't able to bring the head."

Hearing this, Lady Dola gave a wry smile.

"It's fine. Bringing the head of one who regenerates is meaningless."

Saying so, Lady Dola gently stroked the egg once more. Then, as if something had suddenly come to mind, she lifted her face.

"Hey, Laplace."

"What is it?"

Lady Dola lifted the egg she had been holding and handed it to me. Wrapped in a soft cloth, the egg seemed incredibly fragile, as if it might break at any moment.

"If you don't mind, would you give it a name?"

"Huh...? You mean for your child, Lady Dola?"

"Who else is here?"

"Me...? You want me to name it?"

"Who else is here?"

Lady Dola repeated herself twice, then, with a simple "Here," held the egg out in front of me. I thought that rather than asking someone like me, it would have made more sense to have one of the Five Dragon Generals or even Lord Dragon God name it. I hesitated to take it. My hands trembled.

"Don't worry. Dragonfolk eggs don't break so easily."

Reassured by Lady Dola’s words, I was finally able to hold the egg.

It was warm.

As I cradled it in my arms, I could feel something like a heartbeat pulsing through it. I had eaten dragon eggs before, but they had always been cold.

This was completely different.

I was surprised to feel something so full of life.

"Now, decide."

"...Isn't it normal to wait until we see the face? I can't even tell if it’s male or female."

"Then it's male. A boy will be born."

"Can you just decide that on a whim...?"

Despite my confusion, I started thinking. About the name. At that point, I had already made up my mind to name him.

I was the type of man who did what he was told.

"Perugius."

That was the name that came to mind.

Perugius.

Yes, Perugius.

"That's a good name. It sounds strong, wise, and noble."

And so, his name was decided.

That day, he was named Perugius.

After that, uneventful days passed.

I would wake up in the morning, check in with Szilard for updates, feed Saleyakt, and go to sleep. There was no real work to do. My future depended on the results of Szilard's interrogation. If the man truly was the one who killed Crystal, my mission would be complete.

After that... I would likely return to serving as Lady Dola’s proxy. If not, I would simply have to continue searching. Or perhaps, if it turned out he wasn’t the culprit, I might be deemed incompetent and dismissed from my duties altogether.

But I was ordered by Lord Dragon God and entrusted by Lady Dola. I intended to see it through to the end. No matter what anyone said, I would finish what I started. So, I waited solemnly for the outcome.

Those were monotonous days. Sometimes, I would check on the taming facilities, but I didn't do any work. At the time, I felt like a condemned man on death row. I had a bad feeling about everything. Maybe it was because I wasn't used to just waiting. In my long life, that might have been the first and last time I had days where all I could do was wait. Or perhaps it was something else... I'm not sure...

But generally speaking, I was always on a mission. Even so, I was the kind of person who waited for orders before acting. And so, despite my unease, time passed slowly.

One year.

A full year had passed since I captured him. Then, the moment finally came.

Lord Dragon God, who had been away in another world, returned.

A meeting was held.

The topic, of course, was the identity of Crystal's murderer. Not only was I present, but Lady Dola attended as well. She had already finished laying her egg. It wasn't her job to incubate it. Though she would undoubtedly protect it until it hatched... But as one of the Five Dragon Generals, she was devoted enough to attend such an important meeting. I was made to sit on Crystal's chair, and soon all the seats were filled.

"Report."

At Lord Dragon God's command, I stood up and gave a deep bow.

What came from my mouth, naturally, was a summary of my actions up to this point.

"—As I traveled from place to place, the Human God appeared to me and gave me advice. He revealed that I possess a Demon Eye within me and that using it would allow me to find the culprit. Following his guidance, I tracked the suspect and, after a battle, I captured him."

I kept my report as concise as possible. The more I talked, the more I wasted everyone's valuable time.

"I see. So, the Human God gave you guidance."

At my words, Lord Dragon God smiled.

That showed just how much trust he placed in the Human God.

"I escorted the suspect to Dragon Roar Mountain and left the rest to Lord Szilard."

As I concluded, Szilard stood up.

"The results of our investigation are already in."

He picked up a sheet of dragonhide parchment and began to read.

"According to our findings, the culprit's name is Necrolia Nacrolia. A direct blood relative of the Immortal Demon King Necross Lacross, he was one of the Eight Great Demon Kings."

The room erupted into murmurs.

"He was sent to the Dragon World under orders from the Demon God. His mission was to sabotage our teleportation technology. To accomplish this, he targeted and killed Dragon General Crystal. However, he was unable to return due to unforeseen issues with his escape method. As a result, he was forced to remain in this world, erasing his traces and staying in hiding... At least that's what he said."

The first to explode in rage was Kháos.

"Unforgivable!"

Kháos slammed his fist against the table. A thunderous sound echoed through the room, but the table did not break. He must have held back.

"What have we done to the Demons!? If they had a complaint, they should have fought us head-on! Instead, they resorted to an assassination..."

Kháos was visibly, unmistakably enraged. He was absolutely furious. I felt the same way. I didn't show it as openly as Kháos did, but a storm of hatred swirled inside me for that man.

"This is war! We'll march into the Demon World and make those Demon Kings pay!"

Kháos insisted, but the other three were surprisingly calm.

"...Szilard, is that guy still alive?"

It was Maxwell who asked. His eyes were sharp and steady, but he wasn't as blinded by rage as Kháos.

“I killed him. He was so shameless that even I couldn’t hold back.”

“I see. Well, that’s only natural.”

Maxwell’s tone was light. But I could tell. Beneath those words was an unspoken promise— “If he were still alive, I would’ve killed him myself.”

“……”

Lady Dola remained silent. But the killing intent radiating from her was no less than Kháos’. It was the kind of fury that made you feel like approaching her would get you killed.

“Dola, you’re seething too, aren’t you? The Demons did this!”

“Kháos. Be quiet… I feel the same as you.”

“…No, I’m sure your anger burns even stronger than mine.”

At those words, Kháos fell silent. Lady Dola’s fury at that moment was so overwhelming that even Kháos had to concede. It felt as if the slightest provocation would set off an explosion. Szilard looked at us all and spoke.

“Lord Dragon God. Our will is unified. Let us invade the Demon World immediately and make them pay for their foolishness in taking one of the Five Dragon Generals.”

“……”

However, Lord Dragon God was a wise ruler. No—perhaps it would be more accurate to say he was troubled. He pressed a hand to his mouth, thinking deeply, deeply.

“……”

Something in this conversation must have bothered him. Something beyond the grasp of a fool like me. No, perhaps it wasn’t a matter of intelligence. The Five Dragon Generals simply knew too little about the Demons. And Lord Dragon God knew them well. He also knew their God—the Demon God. That’s why his decision was different.

After a long silence, Lord Dragon God finally spoke.

“…We will not fight.”

The Five Dragon Generals were stunned by his conclusion.

“That can’t be.”

“What is there to hesitate about?”

“If we combine our strength, they are nothing—”

Lord Dragon God silenced our objections with a raised hand. Then, in a solemn tone, he declared:

“One of the Five Dragon Generals and one of the Eight Great Demon Kings—this is a mutual loss.”

A mutual loss.

It was impossible to accept. After all, the Demons had attacked first, and that was why Crystal died. If I hadn’t found that man, if his technique hadn’t failed, then he wouldn’t have been discovered, and we wouldn't be in this situation right now. The Dragonfolk would have mourned, and the Demons would have laughed. How could we ever call that a mutual loss?

“If we go to war, we will not come out unscathed. The Demons are not to be taken lightly. We will wait.”

“Guh...”

“I will handle this matter with the Demon God myself.”

But we were his subordinates.

If Lord Dragon God said so, we had no choice but to obey.

“...Understood.”

Everyone reluctantly accepted. Even Lady Dola, who was the very embodiment of loyalty, seemed dissatisfied with this decision. She did not openly object, though.

“Lord Dragon God.”

“What is it, Szilard? Do you have an objection?”

“No, I would never object. If this is your will, we will obey. However... If things end like this, all of Laplace’s efforts over such a long time will go unrewarded. Please grant him some kind of reward.”

Hearing that, I was stunned.

It was completely unexpected. I never needed any reward. For me, serving Lord Dragon God was a given. If anything, I wanted to apologize for how long this had taken.

But then, I heard the other Dragon Generals murmuring, “That’s only fair.” So I kept my mouth shut. It had taken time, but in the end, we had exposed the Demons’ scheme. There was no reason to refuse.

“...Very well.”

Lord Dragon God thought for a moment.

Then, he made his decision without hesitation.

“Then, Laplace. I bestow upon you the title of Demon Dragon King and a place among the Five Dragon Generals. From now on, you will serve at my side and aid me in negotiations with the Demons.”

“What!?”

The Five Dragon Generals were shaken by this decision. But no one was more shocked than me. I... was being made one of the Five Dragon Generals? Even if it was the lower ranking.

It was unbelievable.

It wasn’t even the kind of thing that should be joked about. I had no idea why Lord Dragon God had made such a decision.

“I... I’m against this!”

But I wasn’t the one who said it. It was Kháos. To question Lord Dragon God’s decision was unthinkable for one of the Five Dragon Generals. But even he had reached his limit. And I understood his feelings completely.

Of course, he would oppose this.

If I had been in his place, I would have opposed it too.

"There are others more qualified than him!"

Kháos despised Demons. That said, he never doubted my loyalty. Despite his personal feelings, he must have thought that he would tolerate a “Demon” like me as long as I was working for Lord Dragon God.

However, for him, the idea of someone like me—a half-Demon—becoming one of the Five Dragon Generals was utterly unacceptable.

Even if, at this very moment, my appointment as one of the Five Dragon Generals would aid in the peace negotiations with the Demons. Even so, he couldn't stand the idea of treating someone with the blood of the very Demons who killed Crystal as a special existence among the Dragonfolk.

"...Please."

Kháos looked to the other Five Dragon Generals as if seeking agreement. However, contrary to both his and my expectations, their reactions were surprisingly favorable.

"Isn't it fine? It's true that he's young, but his loyalty to Lord Dragon God is unparalleled, and he has the strength to see missions through."

"He also has the power to defeat one of the Eight Great Demon Kings."

Szilard and Maxwell spoke in agreement. Seeing this, Kháos turned to Lady Dola, as if expecting her to be the one to oppose it.

"...I've been watching him for a long time. He may lack the strength to be called one of the Five Dragon Generals... but then again, so did we at one point. By fighting under Lord Dragon God, we gained the power we have now."

Lady Dola said this before turning to face me.

"Laplace. This is an honor. Strive even harder from now on."

Hearing that, I could no longer refuse. No—there was never any reason to refuse in the first place. As Lady Dola said, this was an immense honor.

My efforts and dedication had been recognized, and at the same time, this appointment would contribute to Lord Dragon God's stated goal of "improving relations with the Demons".

Of course, being one of the Five Dragon Generals also meant I would be a potential candidate for Lord Dragon God's successor. Every reason that Lord Dragon God had for bringing me here would be now fulfilled.

"...This position is beyond what I deserve, but I will serve to the best of my ability."

I stood up, crossed my fists over my chest, and declared my acceptance.

Refusing was never an option to begin with.

"And so, I became one of the Five Dragon Generals... the Demon Dragon King, Laplace."

With that, Laplace let out a small sigh. His expression was difficult to read—something between regret and lingering attachment.

Seeing his face, Rostelina felt a sense of unease. She had wanted to learn more about Laplace, to have him speak freely, but now, she wondered if she was prying into something she shouldn't. Perhaps she was forcing him to talk about something he didn’t want to.

"Lord Laplace... did you not want to become one of the Five Dragon Generals?"

"Hmm? No, that’s not it. If I had truly not wanted it, I would have refused, even at the risk of angering Lord Dragon God... But looking back now, I still think it was a position too grand for someone like me at the time. Though, of course, it was an honor."

"Why is that? You defeated the one who killed one of the Five Dragon Generals, and your strength was acknowledged, wasn’t it?"

"That’s true. But strength alone isn’t enough to become one of the Five Dragon Generals. It shouldn’t be."

Laplace’s words were vague, and Rostelina couldn’t quite understand.

To her, Laplace was like a God.

He was far more than just a man of strength. If anything, he was someone truly worthy of standing above others.

"Lord Laplace is an amazing man. You saved me."

"Really?"

"Yes. You rescued me, Master. Despite being a Cursed Child, I am alive today only because of you. I do not know much about the other Five Dragon Generals, but I can say for certain that there is no one more deserving of the title than you, Master. I’m sure of it!"

Rostelina had been born in a simple Elven village. However, Rostelina was no ordinary child. Her mana was overwhelmingly greater than that of others. Since she was young, her power had repeatedly gone out of control, destroying her village and even killing its people.

As a result, she was cast out.

Abandoned in a remote corner of the Great Forest, she cried alone. She did not have the strength to survive on her own. All that awaited her was death at the hands of monsters. And the one who found her... was none other than Laplace, of course. He uncovered the secret of her body, implanted a magic circle within her, and suppressed her overflowing mana. Thanks to him, Rostelina was able to live in peace.

"It makes me happy to hear you say that. As the last remaining Dragon General, I want to live up to that name."

Laplace spoke with a distant, fleeting look in his eyes.

The last remaining Dragon General.

Rostelina pondered the meaning of those words... but she could not understand. She didn't know. And when you don't know something, the only way to learn is to ask.

"...Master."

But she couldn't bring herself to ask. Whenever Laplace spoke of the past, he always looked pained.

So far, the story has gone well. A wild child from the Demon World received education, earned recognition, and became one of the Dragonfolk's leaders. There was hardly any suffering. Which meant that the true hardship must still be ahead.

Rostelina wanted to know.

Even if it was painful, she wanted to know about Laplace. But if it would cause him pain, she could endure her curiosity.

"Master... Um, if there is anything you need me to do, please tell me. I will always be willing to help."

"I see... then... no, never mind."

Laplace started to say something but stopped himself.

Then, with a faint smile, he shook his head.

"Then, I have one request."

"What is it?"

Laplace gave her a gentle smile and patted her head.

"Go to sleep. I need you to work again tomorrow."

Before she realized it, it was already late into the night. Rostelina had been so engrossed in the conversation that she had forgotten her fatigue.

"...Yes, Master."

Perhaps she might not be able to help him. With that lonely thought in her heart, Rostelina rose from her seat and left the room. She would return to her room and go to sleep.

"....."

Laplace watched her leave, then turned toward his desk.

As he recounted his story, he realized there was one detail he had yet to write down. So, he decided to record it in a book. It was a book summarizing the most important things. It would be ideal to write down everything he knew, but there was no need to do so. So, creating a book that compiled only the most crucial matters was the best solution.

Laplace added a page to the book and wrote:

"Perugius."

It was a name that had to be recorded. As he wrote it down, Laplace muttered to himself—the words he had refrained from saying, knowing they would bring sadness to Rostelina's face.

"To those who read this book, I have a request. A Dragonfolk child who does not know his own name will come to this world. You must tell that child his name. Foolishly, I had forgotten about this, but this too is one of my duties. That child will have white-silver hair. A nameless boy. Please, tell him. His real name is Perugius. Tell him: ‘You are Perugius, son of the great Armored Dragon King, Dola.’ I’m writing this here so that even if I should die before my mission is complete, this knowledge will not be lost."

With those words, Laplace finished writing the page. Then, he placed the book at the center of his desk, in the most prominent spot. Even if he were to perish, someone will surely eventually come here and read it.

Naming the child was Laplace's duty, but there was no rule that dictated he must be the one to do it personally. Of course, deep down, as his godfather he wished to be the one to do so.

"Lady Dola..."

As he murmured the name, Dola’s figure surfaced in his mind.

His teacher, his superior, someone who was almost like a mother to him. And then, the final moments of Dola’s regret and tragic end. Just recalling that moment made his chest tighten.

From deep within his heart, a hatred began to well up. A seething rage, an urge to go on a rampage. To avenge that regret, Laplace had to live. He had to fulfill his mission.

"Phew..."

Closing the book, Laplace leaned back deeply into his chair.

Perhaps it was from moving around so much in the lower realms, or perhaps it was because he was remembering the battle that had made him one of the Five Dragon Generals — either way, his body felt weary. For the first time in a long while, he felt like he might actually sleep.

"Good night, Rostelina."

With those words, Laplace closed his eyes.

For the first time in decades, all the inhabitants of Dragon Roar Mountain had fallen asleep.

TALES FROM THE SIX FACED WORLD
OLD DRAGON'S TALE

Second Part

Chapter 12: The Dragon and the Lady

Many centuries had passed.

Life on Dragon Roar Mountain remained as peaceful as ever.

For humans, many centuries were an unimaginably long time, but for Rostelina, who is an elf, it wasn't much at all.

But even so, it was still enough time for a little girl to grow into a fine lady. Rostelina had grown from a delicate young girl into a beautiful woman.

However, inside, she hadn’t changed much. She was still the same innocent girl as before. That was only natural, considering she had lived her life with no one but Laplace and Saleyakt for company.

Yet, her heart was far from at peace.

Her once ever-present smile had faded, replaced by a heavy gloom that weighed on her. And it was no wonder.

Ever since she heard that story—the one about Laplace becoming one of the Five Dragon Generals—he had started wearing a dark, grim expression more and more often. On the surface, he seemed the same as always, but Rostelina could tell. It wasn’t anger or irritation—nothing so direct. But there was no doubt that negative emotions were building up inside him.

Lately, Laplace had been away from home more often, too. He had always gone out from time to time, but now he only returned about once a month.

She knew the reason.

He was investigating the rumors of the resurrection of the Great Empress of the Demon World, Kishirika Kishirisu.

Speaking of the Great Empress of the Demon World, she was such a famous figure that even Rostelina knew about her. A legendary figure, known far and wide. Thousands of years ago, she led the Demons in a war against humanity. That war happened many centuries before Rostelina was even born. But she knew it had been an enormous conflict, one that engulfed the entire world. The war had only ended when the Empress of the Demon World was defeated.

But if she were to return, that war could start all over again.

What would Laplace do?

Would he side with the Humans? Or the Demons?

Or would he remain a mere spectator, watching from the sidelines? Whatever the case, it was clear he was too busy preparing for what was to come. For now, though, he didn't seem to be thinking that far ahead—he was simply trying to confirm whether the rumors were true or not...

"Haaah..."

Rostelina let out a deep sigh as she gathered the laundry.

She understood that Laplace was busy. He had always been a man driven by a strong sense of duty. If something big was happening in the world, it was only natural that he wouldn't have time to pay attention to her. But still, there was a lingering doubt in her heart.

Maybe... maybe he was avoiding her.

Maybe that conversation had left him in a bad mood. Laplace had told her from the start. "This story ends in tragedy." No matter how good things seemed along the way, the ending was destined to be sad.

But from what she had heard so far, it didn't seem like a tragic story at all. A lonely half-dragonfolk, half-demon child was taken in, educated, and earned a place in the world. It was a success story. If the tale ended here, it wouldn't be a bad ending—it would be a happy one.

But the story wasn't over.

If it were, Laplace wouldn't be living in such a remote place, flying around the world alone, and writing book after book. Something must have happened. Something that made Laplace call it a tragic ending...

Maybe... he didn't want to talk about it.

Maybe he avoided coming home because he didn't want to be pressed to continue the story. If that was the case, Rostelina wanted to tell him loud and clear— "Then just forget about it."

Sure, but still, Rostelina wanted to know.

She wanted to understand the reason behind those sorrowful, pained expressions he sometimes wore. She wanted to know, so she could help him. She wanted to be his support.

But if talking about it only made things harder for him, then she didn't need to know. Even without knowing, she could still support him.

She could do the laundry. She could clean the house.

Over the past hundred years, her cooking has improved a lot. Laplace always said her food was delicious, so she wasn't sure if she had really improved, but at least Saleyakt always ate with enthusiasm and praised her cooking. Well, she couldn't understand Saleyakt's words, so those praises always came through Laplace as a translator...

But still, there were many other ways she could help.

She even refrained from learning the Ancient Dragon God Language, thinking it would be rude to pry into Laplace's secrets or things he didn't want to talk about. But if she worked hard, she could learn to read it, and then she'd be able to organize his bookshelves. So, at the very least, when he did come home... She wanted him to pay attention to her.

Lately, even when he was back, he would shut himself in his study, writing endlessly all day. He always lamented that there wasn't enough time to finish writing everything since he was away for such long periods of time. In the past month, she had only exchanged a few brief words with him.

She wanted more. And she was willing to work for it.

She wasn't a child anymore.

"Ahhh... Master, please come home soon..."

She had finished the laundry, cleaned the house. After lunch, she even tidied up Saleyakt's sleeping area. She made sure to scatter Saleyakt's shed scales and droppings around the house, marking the territory so other dragons wouldn't intrude. Not that they would, anyway.

"...Haaah."

Dinner time was approaching. But Rostelina had no appetite.

"...Ah!"

Just then, her long ears twitched as they caught a sound.

The beating of enormous wings. Stronger, more familiar than those of the Red Dragons that lived nearby.

It was Saleyakt.

Laplace had come home.

"Master!"

Unable to contain herself, Rostelina rushed outside. And sure enough, there he was—Laplace, riding on Saleyakt’s back.

As soon as he saw her, he raised a hand, greeting her. Saleyakt flapped its wings and descended, landing in the open space in front of their home. It was an unexpectedly graceful landing for a Red Dragon. As soon as it touched down, Laplace leaped off Saleyakt. Saleyakt yawned, as if exhausted, and sluggishly made its way to the back of the house. It had likely grown quite tired after flying around continuously.

"I'm home, Rostelina. What's the matter? It's rare for you to come out and greet me outside."

"It's not rare! Lately, I've been greeting you all the time."

"Have you? ...I see. My apologies."

"No, it's fine! Um, Lord Laplace... would you like something to eat?"

Rostelina asked hesitantly. More often than not, when she asked if Laplace wanted to eat, he would refuse. After all, Laplace rarely ate.

"Ah, yes. I’ve been flying around without eating or drinking, and now I’m starving. So yes, please."

"Yes!"

But today seemed to be different. Rostelina responded cheerfully and rushed into the kitchen. The stove’s fire had not been put out.

She poured water from the jug into a pot, set it to boil, and immediately began preparations.

"Rostelina."

"Yes! What is it, Master?"

Hearing his voice from behind, Rostelina spun around, about to run over to him.

"Ah, no, it's fine. Just listen while you keep cooking."

Laplace’s voice stopped her in her tracks.

Pouting slightly, Rostelina resumed cooking.

"Today, I confirmed it. The Great Demon World Empress, Kishirika Kishirisu has indeed been resurrected. No, calling it a resurrection might not be quite right. She probably revived over five hundred years ago. She was in her complete form. And just like during the war in the past, she has become a puppet master of belligerent Demon Kings... War is coming."

Rostelina's hands paused for a moment. But they quickly resumed moving. Even if someone told her a war was coming... she didn't really understand what it meant. She had never experienced war. The great war known as the Human-Demon War had reportedly claimed an extraordinary number of lives. But for Rostelina, who lived a secluded life on Dragon Roar Mountain, it had little relevance. No matter how large a war was, she couldn't imagine it reaching this far.

"And apparently, that war... is being orchestrated from the shadows by him."

"Him?"

"The one I have been pursuing, the one I must defeat... my enemy."

Rostelina's hands stopped.

"I don't know what his goal is. But I have a duty to uncover it and put an end to it. He always lays groundwork ahead of time. If I don't remove the pieces and traps he has set, then I will inevitably be cornered."

"....."

"That's why I will take part in this war. I don't know yet which side I'll end up on, though."

Before Rostelina's eyes, the water in the pot began to boil vigorously. But she couldn't help turning around. Laplace was strong. But he was alone. The other Dragon Generals were gone. And his enemy was likely the one who had killed them. He might die. Laplace might lose.

"Master..."

With an uneasy feeling, Rostelina peeked into the dining room. Laplace sat in his chair as usual, looking composed. But there was something—something like a shadow clinging to his face.

Maybe... they wouldn't meet again. She had a terrible premonition.

"Ah, don't worry, Rostelina. The war won't start for a while yet. Until then, I'll stay here with you."

Whether he sensed her unease or not, Laplace smiled as he spoke.

"So come on, make me something to eat. My stomach’s been growling for a while now."

"...Yes."

Prompted by his words, Rostelina returned to the kitchen and resumed cooking. She made soup, grilled meat, and added vegetables. Before she knew it, it was done.

But when she tasted it, she couldn’t tell if it had any flavor.

"Hmm, it’s delicious as always."

Laplace ate the meal and said so.

But... was it really delicious?

"What’s wrong, Rostelina? You’re awfully quiet today."

"Master..."

"Hmm?"

"Do you really have to go to that war?"

At that question, Laplace blinked in surprise for a moment. But then his face turned serious, and he nodded.

"Yes, I must go. Especially if he’s involved."

"Why...?"

Why? That question slipped out from somewhere beyond Rostelina’s own will. She hadn’t meant to ask. She thought she shouldn’t. But she did.

"I see... You’re right. I had forgotten. I never finished telling you, did I? So you don’t know."

"Huh?"

"I’ll tell you. If you listen, you’ll understand. What happened after that, in the Dragon World... no, in all the worlds. What my mission is. And why I must fight him."

At those words, Rostelina hesitantly asked.

"Are you sure... you want to talk about it?"

"It’s not something I wish to forget. It’s painful, and it’s tragic, but the past should not be forgotten. I will tell you all of it. So that I won’t forget it."

Laplace spoke as if making a firm decision.

"Sit down, Rostelina. Or... do you not want to hear it?"

At those words, Rostelina swallowed hard.

She wanted to hear it.

What had happened in Laplace’s life?

What had befallen him as one of the Five Dragon Generals?

He was the one who had brought it up. There was no way she didn’t want to hear it—no way she didn’t want to know.

"Please, tell me."

And so, she took her seat. The seat beside Laplace—her usual place.

"Alright, then. I’ll tell you... the conclusion of the story of the Dragon World."

And with that, Laplace began to speak.

The final story of the Demon Dragon King, Laplace—one of the Five Dragon Generals.

Chapter 13: The Dragon Diplomat

Now, before we get to the main topic, let's first go over the roles of the Five Dragon Generals. As I mentioned before, each of the Five Dragon Generals was assigned a specific duty by Lord Dragon God.

- Lady Dola was in charge of taming dragons.
- Maxwell handled the extermination of monsters.
- Kháos oversaw the forging of weapons and armor.
- Szilard managed the Dragon Warriors.

In addition to these official duties, there were also covert operations, but let's set that aside for now.

As one of the Five Dragon Generals, I was given a specific role.

That role was to assist Lord Dragon God

You could call it a bodyguard position... but honestly, being a personal attendant is probably a more accurate description.

I was to stay close to Lord Dragon God, who was constantly traveling from place to place, protecting him, offering advice, bringing him drinks — handling all sorts of miscellaneous tasks.

It might sound like a menial job, but for a newly appointed member of the Five Dragon Generals like me, it was a fitting assignment. More importantly, it allowed me to remain by Lord Dragon God's side at all times—there was no greater honor.

Naturally, the other Five Dragon Generals weren't happy about it. Every single one of them respected, feared, and worshipped Lord Dragon God. For a newcomer like me to be granted such an honorable position? There was no way they'd be pleased. Of course, even if they were dissatisfied, they didn't voice any complaints. Given my standing, being an attendant was an appropriate duty, and they had no real reason to oppose it.

And so, I accompanied Lord Dragon God as we traveled to other worlds. Teleportation magic hadn't been perfected yet, but there were still ways to traverse worlds.

In every world, there was always an altar somewhere. When Lord Dragon God arrived at one, the altar would activate, transporting us to a barren space, a place of pure white void.

By passing through that void, we could reach another world's altar.

The first place we arrived at—

A world shrouded in poison and miasma...

That's right—the Demon World.

"This place is..."

Stepping down from the altar, I took in the scene before me and froze.

The Demon World—a place filled only with bitter memories for me. Naturally, I had expected that returning here would stir up all my resentment and anger.

"What's wrong?"

"It's nothing."

But now that I had grown up, things were a little different.

Maybe because I had matured, I found that the cities of the Demon World I had once longed for no longer interested me. There was no hatred. Even the Beasts wandering in the distance only felt... nostalgic. I suppose that meant I had no lingering attachments to this place anymore.

"Let's go."

"Understood!"

Without saying where he was headed, Lord Dragon God took off into the sky. I didn't ask any foolish questions—I simply followed.

His destination was the heart of the Demon World. A massive crater, so vast it could be mistaken for a mountain range from afar. Countless homes lined its interior, and at its center stood a towering black iron fortress.

The heart of the Demon World—The Demon God City Daileck, and the Demon God's Castle, Gaileck.

As we approached the castle, I noticed bonfires burning in a circular formation on the rooftop. Without hesitation, Lord Dragon God descended into the center of that circle.

Surrounding us stood countless demons.

There were many different types. Some had multiple arms, others had beast-like legs. Some emitted a faint phosphorescent glow, while others had no eyes at all. None of them looked particularly welcoming toward Lord Dragon God and me. They didn't openly show hostility, but the tension in the air made their feelings clear.

"GAHAHAHAHA! Lord Dragon God! Welcome!"

Amidst the tense atmosphere, one demon stepped forward. Unlike the others, he exuded a sense of openness—he laughed heartily and approached us with a friendly demeanor. However—

"Hmm."

The moment he saw me, he stopped.

His smile vanished, and his face turned serious.

"....."

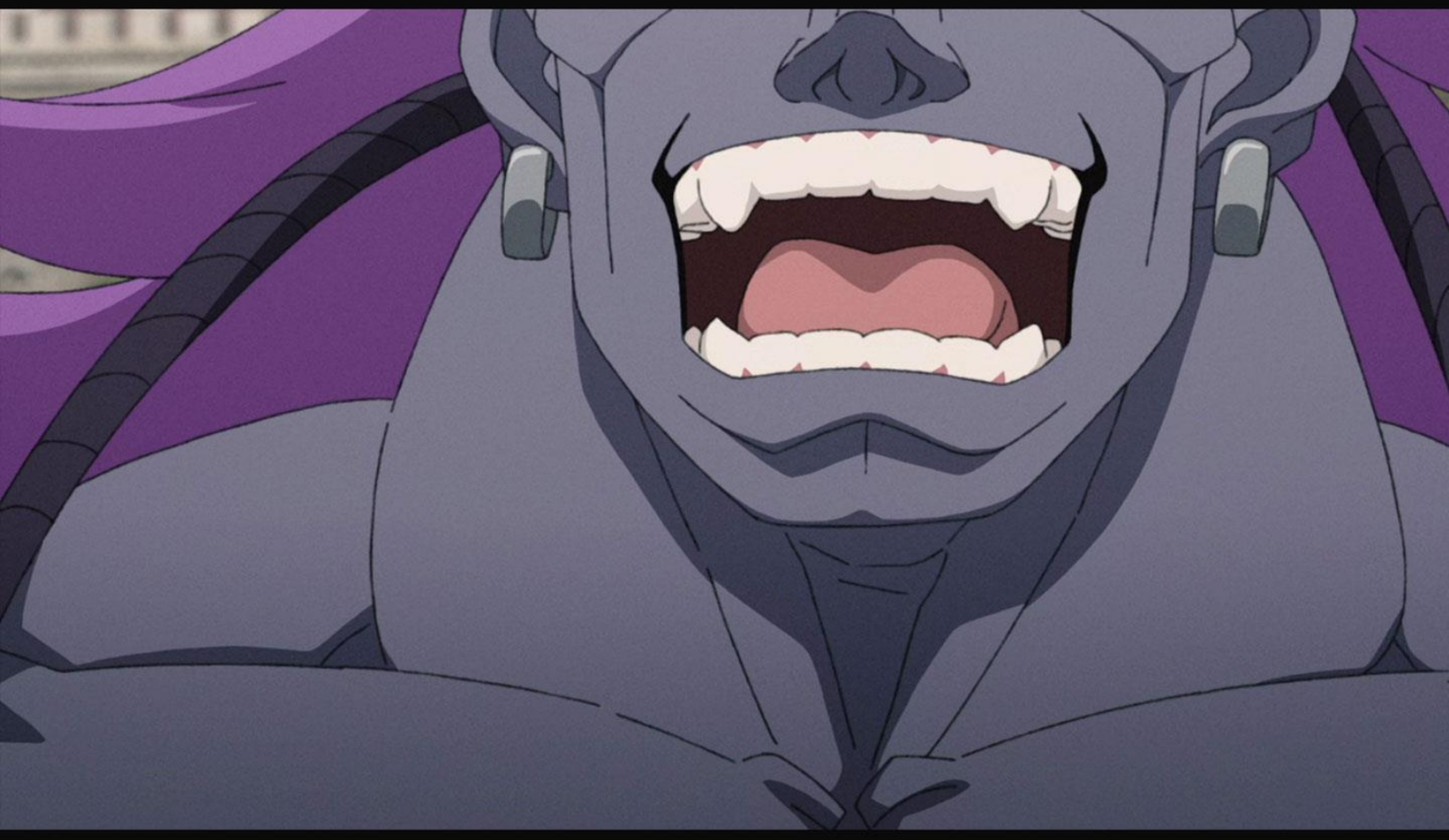
I, too, was at a loss for words when I saw him. I recognized him.

Dark skin, six arms, long purple hair, and a bare upper body.

The sight of him made me shudder.

Long ago... even by that time's standards, a very long time ago— Back when I still lived on the Demon World. There had been a man who had beaten me down countless times — Back when I tried to enter a city, only to be chased away over and over again

Yes, that's exactly who he was.



"This man is my bodyguard. One of the Five Dragon Generals, the Demon Dragon King Laplace."

Lord Dragon God's words suddenly broke the silence between me and the Demon King. Hearing those words reminded me why I had been chosen as one of the Five Dragon Generals and why I was here. I immediately bowed deeply and introduced myself.

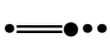
"I am the Demon Dragon King Laplace. It is an honor to make your acquaintance!"

"Hmm..."

The Demon King looked like he was thinking for a brief moment. And then—

"GAHAHAHAHA! I am one of the Eight Great Demon Kings, Necross Lacross! Remember my name well!"

Then he laughed heartily once again.



So, what was the purpose of traveling to another world?

A meeting.

The Gods of each world regularly held meetings. I believe I mentioned this before. Naturally, these meetings continued to this day.

The location rotated, but the Dragon World, the Sky World, and the Sea World were rarely chosen. After all, every God had attendants like me, and some of them couldn't fly or swim. That logistical issue made those worlds impractical for hosting them. So I guess they took that into consideration. But in any case, this was a meeting of Gods...

They were mostly about the recent issues affecting each world. Namely, the appearance of monsters and the sudden occurrences of teleportation. Every world was struggling to deal with these problems, but no solutions had been found yet. In fact, by the time I started attending these meetings—standing behind Lord Dragon God and observing—the Gods' relationships had already become strained.

"More monsters! An entire town was wiped out!"

"One of our leaders disappeared due to teleportation! It started a war that cost thousands of lives!"

"Hmph, there's a rumor that your side has already completed research on teleportation. I hope this isn't your own doing?"

"What did you say...? Do you believe in such baseless rumors? Then allow me to believe in the rumor that you are the ones creating the monsters!"

A man with numerous tentacles growing from his mouth and slimy, squid-like skin—the Sea God.

A man with twin heads of a dog and a cat, mounted on a white wolf—the Beast God.

A beautiful man with two eyes on his forehead and six wings sprouting from his back—the Sky God.

A towering man over three meters tall, possessing eight arms and six horns—the Demon God.

The relationship between these four, in particular, was hostile.

Every time they faced each other in meetings, they exchanged insults, their words were brimming with such hostility that it seemed a fight could break out at any moment. Despite the dignity of the Gods, the sheer intensity of their wrath and the overwhelming power emanating from their bodies made them truly terrifying.

"Now, now, everyone, please calm down. It is not in our best interest to be fighting like this. Do not worry. The research is progressing smoothly, and we will surely uncover the cause. Do not be deceived by baseless rumors."

"That's right. There is no point in us fighting. If we were to battle, it would only lead to the suffering of our people."

Among them, only two individuals tried to prevent the conflict.

Our great Lord Dragon God.

And a man whose entire appearance seemed as if covered in a mosaic, making it strangely difficult to remember—the Human God.

If not for those two, the worlds would have long since rejected each other, and war would have already begun.

"....."

Upon hearing the Human God's words, all the Gods fell silent.

The Human God was widely respected.

Not only was he the founder of these meetings, but due to the rapid advancements of humanity, he frequently provided guidance to the other Gods. Simply put, what he had given far exceeded what he had received.

That is why everyone respected and acknowledged the Human God. Even Lord Dragon God was no exception.

"Hmph, you put on a composed face, Dragon God."

Yet, the Demon God did not remain silent.

And his next words were enough to make me tremble.

"I have heard a rumor that you kidnapped my son, Necrolia Nacrolia, tortured him, and ultimately killed him."

At those words, I trembled internally. A statement like that could easily ignite a war with the Demon World. And I knew very well that this rumor was true. The Dragonfolk had their own justifications, but if he were to answer honestly, war would be inevitable.

"...It is nothing more than a rumor. I know of no such person."

Lord Dragon God lied.

I had thought he was someone who would never lie, so I was a little surprised. No, it was only natural.

If he spoke the truth, he would also have to address the fact that Necrolia Nacrolia had killed Crystal. The end result would be a heated argument—and war. Perhaps the Demon God was provoking this confrontation on purpose. But we could not afford to take the bait.

Lord Dragon God chose a different path.

"More importantly, Demon God, look at this man."

Lord Dragon God directed everyone's gaze toward me, standing right behind him. I immediately offered my deepest bow. I had to ensure I did not bring shame to Lord Dragon God

"A half-breed of Dragonfolk and Demon? Now that you mention it, you did say you took someone from my world before. So, what of it?"

"I have made him a high-ranking official of the Dragonfolk. A proof that we have no intent to be enemies with the Demons."

"...Hmph."

The Demon God snorted as he looked at me. He scrutinized me, his eyes were shining. They quite literally shone. That was probably some kind of Demon Eyes. And after looking at me with those Demon Eyes, the Demon God leaned back into his chair.

"Very well. I shall believe you."

Though I had been taken in for this very purpose, this was the first time I had ever been useful. At least for now, a direct clash between the Demon World and the Dragon World had been avoided.

"...I do not desire war either."

At the very least, it seemed that even the Demon God did not wish to go to war with the Dragon World. No, not just the Demon God. None of the Gods truly wished for a great war.

They were irritated, they wanted answers, and doubted each other—but still, they did not desire a full-scale war. That was how these meetings always were. Perhaps in the past, they had been much more amicable, but at this time, everyone was on edge and ready for conflict.

Though the meetings were meant for exchanging information, little of substance was ever discussed. Nobody wanted to share valuable information with a potential culprit. It was an unpleasant space to be in.

And so, improving that unpleasant atmosphere was essentially my mission.

I was entrusted with diplomacy.

Of course, that did not mean I was to befriend the other Gods. My role was to establish good relations with the subordinates of the other Gods. In other words, those like me—the errand boys.

Even though they were considered errand boys, they were still people of significant standing in their respective worlds, just like me. If I built trust with them, it would help prevent the worst-case scenario in times of crisis. That was the underlying intent.

The first people I reached out to were those from the Demon World, as tensions between our sides had been growing increasingly worse. The people of the Dragon World were becoming more hostile toward the Demon World. Judging by the meeting that day, it seemed the same was true on the other side.

That was why I believed establishing a connection with the Demon World was the path to peace.

"Sir Necross Lacross."

After the meeting ended, I approached a large and imposing man.

"Indeed, I am one of the Eight Great Demon Kings, the Immortal Demon King Necross Lacross."

Necross Lacross turned around and was about to laugh heartily, but upon seeing me, his expression turned serious.

"You are..."

His sharp, rugged face twisted in a troubled manner as he glared at me. It would not have been surprising if he had assumed I was here for revenge.

That is why I spoke first.

"Allow me to formally introduce myself. I am one of the Five Dragon Generals, the Demon Dragon King Laplace. I am not an unnamed Humanoid Beast. I am Laplace."

"...Hmm."

At those words, Necross Lacross shifted into the demeanor of a true Demon King. I later learned that, at that very moment, he had decided not to bring up the past. And I, too, had no intention of bearing any grudge against him. Because there was no point. Much had changed between then and now.

"Lately, bad rumors about the Demon World have been spreading throughout the Dragon World. I was hoping to assist in dispelling them."

"Oh? I have no objections to that. However, I've heard that the Dragonfolk harbors hatred toward demons."

"The fact that I, a half-Dragonfolk, half-Demon, was chosen as one of the Five Dragon Generals—that alone should serve as proof that those rumors are nothing more than baseless gossip."

"....."

"Lord Dragon God desires peace. If the Demon God does not seek conflict, then I ask for your cooperation, please."

As I spoke, Necross Lacross crossed all six of his arms and looked down at me. I stood firm, accepting his rude, scrutinizing gaze head-on. He was probably trying to see through any lies I might be telling. Depending on how one looks at it, my appointment could also be interpreted as a mere ploy by the Dragonfolk to lower the demons' guard.

"Hmm."

After some time, Necross Lacross gave a grand nod.

"Lord Demon God does not seek war either! Lately, too many strange occurrences have been happening, which has put him in a foul mood, but that's all!"

"Then?"

"Very well. I shall cooperate with you!"

And so, I formed an alliance with Necross Lacross.

From that point on, I worked alongside him to gather allies across the various worlds. Since I had to follow along with the Gods' meetings, it took quite some time, but... I was able to travel to every world.

There was the Sea World, a world of endless seas, where no land existed, and its inhabitants bore gills, fins, and scales.

It was a shocking sight.

After all, I had never seen the sea before. The Demon World barely had any water, let alone seas, and while the Dragon World had waterfalls and lakes, there was nothing that could truly be called an ocean.

And yet, before me stretched an endless expanse of water. A world so monotonous that it even inspired a sense of fear. Of course, the sea's surface was empty, but beneath the waves, life thrived.

Then there was the Beast World. A world of vast forests and towering mountains that stretched on and on.

That, too, was astonishing.

The Dragon World had mountains and trees as well. However, this world was entirely green, overflowing with life within its dense forests. The sheer density of it all was staggering. Every step revealed an abundance of insects and reptiles. Compared to other worlds, which often had vast empty spaces, this one was alive with activity. Although, since you come from the Great Forest, you might not find this surprising.

The Sky World was a world of floating land masses, where only those who could fly could live. It closely resembled the Dragon World.

However, while the Dragon World's land lay above, in this world, the ground was below. That ground, however, was covered in salt, with a shallow layer of water pooled on top. The water was barely ankle-deep, and when I tasted it, it was salty. One could even call it a sea, considering how saturated with salt it was. Regardless, it was not a place suited for life. All creatures lived in the sky, and most of them were covered in feathers.

Looking back now, it was a beautiful world. But having only ever seen creatures covered in scales, those feathered beings struck me as eerie.

Then, there was the Human World.

A world of endless grasslands. The slightly undulating plains stretched as far as the eye could see. The forests were not large enough to be called forests, and the mountains not tall enough to be called mountains. It was simply an environment perfectly suited for human habitation.

And the people who lived there were astonishingly fragile. At the time, I wondered how such weak creatures could even survive. Though, I later learned that they had grown stronger than they had been before. Compared to the other races, they were like infants. And yet, their world was far more advanced than the others. Tall buildings stood in rows, roads had been built, and armies were created. Even if they were weak, as long as they had no natural predators, they could rule their world.

In these worlds, I gradually gathered more allies.

It took time, but once others learned that Necross Lacross had given his approval, the rest was easy. No one wanted to pick a fight with the Dragon World or the Demon World. After all, compared to the other worlds, the inhabitants of these two Worlds possessed overwhelming combat prowess.

And when representatives of both worlds loudly proclaimed a path to peace, even those who remained skeptical had no choice but to go along with it. Despite being swayed by weird rumors, the people of these worlds still longed for peace. Whenever the Gods gathered for their meetings, I assembled their guards and held our own discussions.

What should be done from here on out?

What was needed for lasting peace?

I voiced my thoughts as concretely as possible and fostered constructive discussions. Of course, not everything went smoothly.

Why, you ask?

Because the faces attending these meetings as guards kept changing. Particularly among the Beastfolk and Humans. Compared to the Dragonfolk and Demons, their lives were mere moments. Their lifespans were short.

The Skyfolk lived longer, but even they had frequent changes. The Seafolk had wildly varying lifespans depending on the individual, so their members changed irregularly. And when the people changed, their personalities changed as well. Some new members openly expressed hostility toward other races. But I never gave up.

Together with Necross Lacross, I worked tirelessly to unite them. The Gods had no intention of fighting. And so, we, too, should follow their will and seek a path to peace. As those who are closest to the Gods, we must take the lead and serve as examples.

Some changed their minds, while others did not. But at the very least, there were times when everyone was in agreement, and during those moments, progress was made. Of course, meetings weren't the only thing we did.

We took action for the sake of peace. Some things worked, some didn't, but we tried everything we could.

The most effective measure was personnel exchange. We sent individuals to live in each other's worlds. If they performed well there, it would improve the perception of other races. Just as was my case.

There were worlds, like the Sea World, that only a few could visit. But with the assistance of the Gods, it wasn't impossible. The Dragon World brought in engineers from other worlds. The Dragon World was full of mighty warriors, but it lagged behind in technological advancements. Preservation techniques, papermaking, agriculture...

Rather than having Lord Dragon God relay knowledge verbally, bringing in specialists was far faster and more effective. No, it wasn't that Lord Dragon God was at fault. Lord Dragon God had faithfully conveyed all the technologies he brought back from other worlds to the Dragon World leaving nothing aside.

However, technology is something that advances daily. By the time we Dragonfolk fully mastered a technology, it often had already become outdated. The long lifespan of the Dragonfolk and our slow-paced approach to technological development were also contributing factors. But having skilled craftsmen within our world helped resolve this issue. Conversely, the Dragon World sent its Dragon Warriors to other worlds.

The Dragonfolk are strong.

From the perspective of other worlds, their power was godlike—truly an overwhelming force. These Dragon Warriors ventured into other worlds and undertook monster extermination.

It was around this time that I learned something—the strength of monsters varies depending on the world. The more powerful the native creatures of a world, the stronger its monsters.

And, in comparison to all other worlds, the monsters of the Dragon World were the strongest. Our Dragon Warriors, who battled against these ultimate creatures, proved to be outstanding in other worlds. At the same time, they also became feared—but let's set that aside for now.

Many different engineers came to the Dragon World. Among them, one woman from the Demon World stood out.

The Demon Empress Kirishisu Karishisu.[14]

The wife of the Demon God.

She was more concerned than anyone else about the growing hostility between the Dragon World and the Demon World. That's why she took the initiative to come to the Dragon World herself. She was capable of Advanced Magic.

Not Magic Techniques—but Magic.[15]

It's difficult to explain the difference between Magic and Magic Techniques.

Both involve manipulating mana to create supernatural phenomena. However, I suppose one could say that Magic allows for more advanced feats without requiring incantations or magic circles.

In fact, she was the one who first created the magic circles.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that she is at the root of the foundation of many forms of modern Magic Techniques that exist today.

She dedicated herself to the Dragon World.

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[14] Last fan made translations called her "Kilisis Calisis," but her name is "Kirishisu Karishisu" (キリシス・カリシス).

[15] The difference here could be "Sorcery" (魔術) vs "Magic" (魔法). But based on the Kanjis, this could also be "Magic Techniques" vs "Magic System".

While the Dragon World had conducted some research into "Power,"[16] every aspect of it saw dramatic advancements thanks to her contributions.

In the Dragon World, demons were widely regarded as savage and foolish. However, many revised their perception after witnessing her. She was intelligent, capable, and peaceful. In some ways, she even reminded me of Lady Lunaria. Though, personality-wise, they were nothing alike.

Perhaps that's why—no, that probably wasn't the only reason—but she and Lady Lunaria grew especially close. As wives of Gods, they must have shared a mutual understanding.

Thanks to the efforts of Kirishisu Karishisu and me—both hailing from the Demon World—the hostility towards the Demon World gradually faded within the Dragon World.

Even Kháos, who had once been openly antagonistic toward the Demon World, no longer displayed that hostility. My hard work had finally borne fruit. Things were progressing smoothly. Meetings with other races became more relaxed over time. Teleportation incidents and monster appearances still occurred, but the fact that we no longer had to suspect our neighbors seemed to have a positive effect. Even Lord Dragon God praised my efforts.

Now, when good things happen, they tend to come in waves.

And then, even greater news arrived.

Lady Lunaria had given birth.

The child of Lord Dragon God had been born.

[16] In here, they quite literally used the Kanji for "Power" (『力』). But he's talking about "Mana." At this point in the story, this "power" had different names across the world. The Dragonfolk would call it "Dragon Power" (龍力) and the Demon World "Magic Power" (魔力). We'll see more about this in a later chapter.

Chapter 14: The Birth Festival, and Then...

To tell the truth, until then, the Dragon World had no tradition of holding festivals. Perhaps because we lived such long lives, the idea of gathering in large numbers to celebrate something was rather foreign to us.

But this time was different.

The entire Dragon World was in a festive mood. Of course, it was only natural. After all, the child of Lord Dragon God, whom everyone revered, and Lady Lunaria, whom everyone adored, had finally been born.

At Szilard's command, a grand parade was held on Dragon Roar Mountain. Maxwell traveled across the Dragon World, gathering dragon meat. Even the dragons under training at Lady Dola's domain were treated to feasts for days on end. Kháos, using knowledge from the Human World, created "fireworks" to further enliven the parade.

People from all over the Dragon World gathered with the hopes to just catch a glimpse of Lord Dragon God's child.

And it wasn't just for a day or two. The festival lasted for ten, then twenty years. Since the Dragonfolk had long lifespans, our joy endured just as long. I believe the celebrations went on for about a hundred years.

Everyone looked so happy. That was the only time I ever saw the Dragon World so overjoyed.

Lord Dragon God and I arrived at the festival a little late. We had been attending a meeting of the Gods. But of course, the moment Lord Dragon God returned, the people welcomed him with resounding cheers.

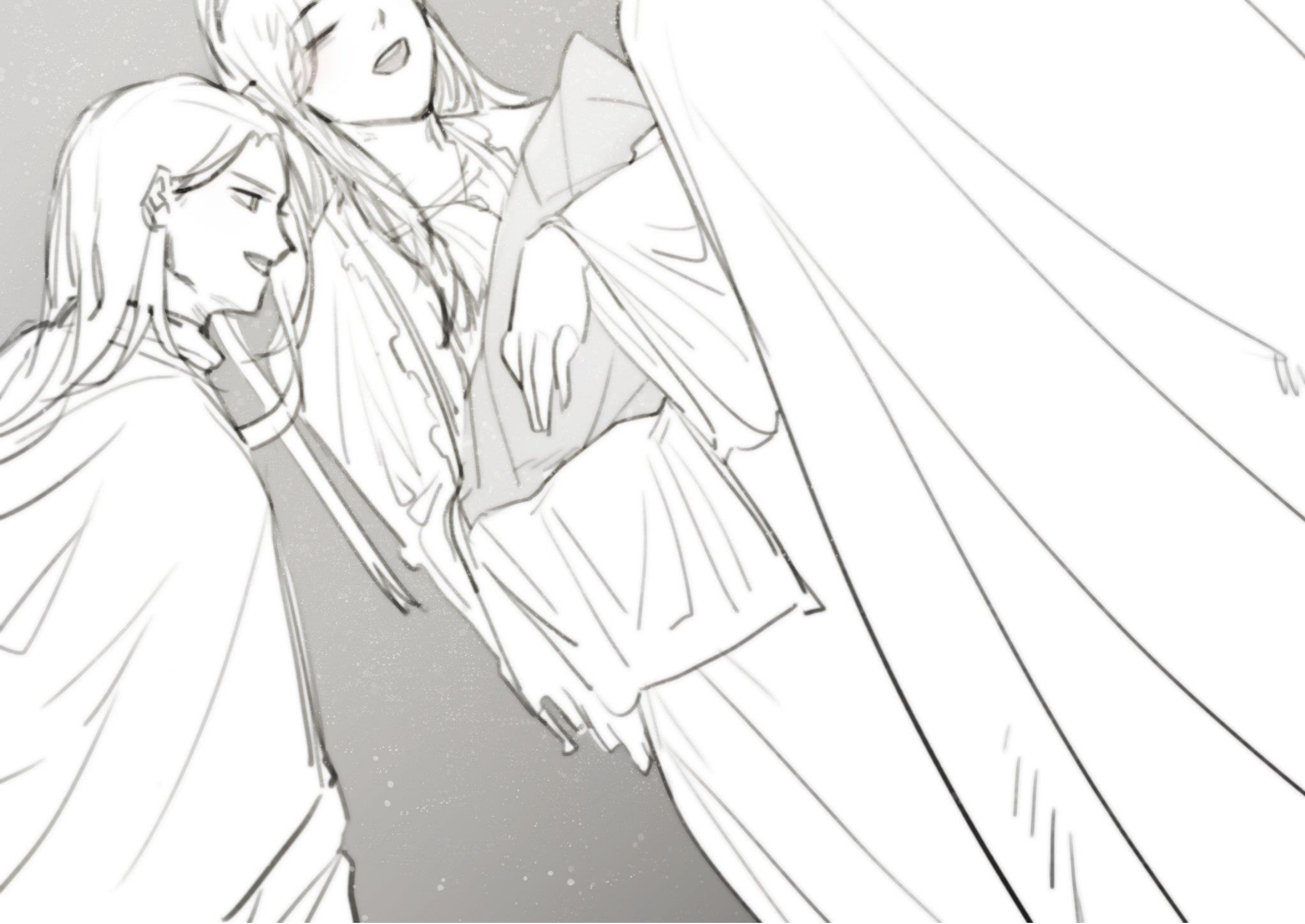
It all happened so suddenly that I couldn't make sense of it at first, but Lord Dragon God immediately understood what was going on. Without hesitation, he hurried back home. Naturally, I followed. When we arrived, our family was there to greet us.

"Welcome home, my Lord, and Laplace."

Lady Lunaria, her attendants—And then there was Lady Lunaria's beautiful child, held in her arms like a precious jewel.

"My Lord, the baby has been born."

"So it seems."



Even Lord Dragon God, for whom this was his own child, appeared slightly bewildered. He wasn't one to smile often, so his expression was serious as usual. But I could tell—he was happy.

"Please, hold him."

"...Ah."

Lord Dragon God received the Young Master[17] from Lady Lunaria. His hands were steady, but there was a slight trembling.

"It's a strange feeling. I always thought of all the people of the Dragon World as my own children, but this one... feels a little special."

"Ufufu. My lord, please give this Child a name."

At her words, Lord Dragon God stared at Lady Lunaria intently.

"Me?"

"Yes."

Watching them, I couldn't help but feel nostalgic. That's right—when I was taken in, a similar conversation had taken place...

"I see... Hmm..."

However, Lord Dragon God suddenly fell silent. It was unusual for him, as he was the type to make decisions quickly after careful consideration.

"What's the matter...?"

"I can't think of one."

"You must. It is the duty of the husband to name his child."

"I know. But right now, I just can't. I'll think about it."

"Alright."

Thus, the Young Master's name wasn't decided right away.

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[17] As I mentioned before, when Lunaria and the Dragon God say "the child" or "the son" they are using the term "Miko" (御子). But, because of that, Laplace starts using another term from here, which is "Miko-sama" (御子様). So I'll use "Young Master".

Lord Dragon God wasn’t indecisive. On the contrary, he was a man of swift and resolute decisions. But naming a being that was practically his own extension was different from naming someone like me.

He pondered over it for a long time. At times, he even asked for my opinion. Of course, I couldn’t give him a proper response. How could I? How could someone like me dare to name Lord Dragon God’s child? If—by some absurd chance—my suggestion was actually chosen... Even now, the thought alone is enough to make my head go blank with fear.

But let’s set that aside for now.

After holding the baby for a while, Lord Dragon God returned the Young Master to Lady Lunaria. She then walked over to where I stood, as I watched from the corner of the room.

"Laplace, you should hold this child too."

Seeing Lord Dragon God lost in thought, Lady Lunaria spoke those words.

I was shocked.

Could I really do something so audacious?

"...Me? Is that truly alright?"

"Of course. He is your younger brother, after all."

Technically, since I was considered an adopted child, that was true. Still, I had always known my place. I was not Lord Dragon God's child, not truly.

I no longer saw myself as merely a pet, but I was aware of my position. If I ever forgot the gratitude I owed for being taken in and began acting arrogantly, I would not hesitate to kill myself.

And yet—Lady Lunaria said I should hold him. She called him my younger brother. I was not so stubborn or inflexible as to refuse her kindness.

"Y-Yes."

I took the Young Master into my arms.

His body was much warmer than that of other Dragonfolk. No, perhaps that was simply because he was a newborn. As I nervously held him, I studied his face, worried that the Young Master might be uncomfortable.

The child bore a striking resemblance to Lord Dragon God. The same silver hair, the same sharp features. Even the color of his scales was identical, though as a half-human, he had fewer scales than full-blooded Dragonfolk.

Notably, his face had almost no scales at all.

Thinking back now, his mixed heritage made the pattern of his scales somewhat similar to mine. No, it would be far too disrespectful to claim any resemblance between myself and the Young Master...

Yet, as I held the Young Master, I felt something stir within me. This child would one day lead the Dragon World.

It would be my duty to support him. I must protect him, no matter what.

That thought filled my heart.

After that, the other Dragon Generals arrived one after another.

Szilard, Maxwell, Kháos, and even Lady Dola.

Each of them looked upon the Young Master and was deeply moved. And by the time they left, their expressions had all become solemn. Perhaps they felt the same way I did. It wasn't just the Five Dragon Generals.

Gods from other worlds came as well.

Normally, the other Gods did not appear in worlds that were not theirs. But that day was different. The Human God, the Demon God, the Sky God, the Sea God, and the Beast God all appeared and offered their blessings to the Young Master. It was a magnificent sight.

Of course, it would be. Gods who rarely ever show themselves had gathered to celebrate the birth of the Young Master. It was a display of true divine authority. Every citizen of the Dragon World must have realized just how extraordinary this birth was. And then, as the festival drew to a close—

As the excitement across the Dragon World began to settle—

She arrived.

A woman from the Demon World, with dark purple skin and white hair.

The Demon Empress, Kirishisu Karishisu.

"Lunaria! Congratulations!"

"Kirishisu, I was wondering if you would come!"

As I mentioned before, Lady Lunaria and Kirishisu had become good friends. The moment Lady Lunaria saw her, a smile spread across her face. To be honest, I don't know exactly how close they were. Back then, I was away from home too often. But seeing them laughing together like that, made me think that they must have been quite close.

"If you gave birth, of course I'd come running."

"And yet you took your time."

"My research has been going well lately. I kept telling myself I'd come, but when things are progressing smoothly, you just want to keep pushing forward, don't you?"

"Has it really been going that well?"

"Yes. It seems Dragonfolk researchers excel at meticulous observation. At first, I thought they were a sluggish bunch, but once they uncover one thing, they quickly piece together countless others from their accumulated knowledge. It's exhilarating to watch."

"I've heard that Demon researchers are also quite brilliant."

"FAHAHAHAHA! Lunaria, you say the funniest things! Demons are nothing but crude idiots! There's no such thing as an idiot who is also a brilliant researcher!"

Kirishisu was a woman who laughed often. Actually, it wasn't just Kirishisu. Among demons—especially those ranked as Demon Kings—laughter was common. After laughing heartily, Kirishisu turned her gaze to the Young Master in Lady Lunaria's arms.

"Let me have a look at this baby. The child of the Great Lord Dragon God and my dearest friend Lunaria—let's see how wise he is."

"Hehehe, here you go."

"Oh-ho! Incredible! This one is unbelievably smart! As expected of a Dragonfolk prince! I can feel the sheer brilliance radiating from him! I can tell—this child is growing more intelligent by the second! He'll be quite the wise man in the future, without a doubt!"

It almost sounded like she was mocking the child, but this was her way of giving praise. Kirishisu was one of the more intelligent Demons, and her heart was full of kindness—but, well, she wasn't the most eloquent speaker.

"Do you really think this child will be that smart?"

"Absolutely. I trust my own eyes. My own sons, on the other hand, are all hopeless idiots. Every last one of them had that stupid look on their faces. This one is completely different!"

"Hehehe, is that so?"

What's that?

You're wondering if it's okay for Kirishisu to badmouth her own sons, even though she's the wife of the Demon God? You think it might be blasphemous to insult the children of a God?

Hmm. Well, you have a point. Even if Kirishisu had a close relationship with the Demon God, speaking ill of a God's children should be an unthinkable offense. However, among demons, being "brainless and bold" wasn't considered a bad thing. A person who was reckless and straightforward was seen as someone trustworthy, someone who would never betray others.

That's how Demons viewed it.

Of course, being intelligent and meticulous wasn't bad either. Both intelligence and foolishness were virtues in the Demon World. So, Kirishisu wasn't insulting anyone at all. She simply meant that the Young Master would grow into someone quite different from her own sons—someone exceptional. It's just a difference in values, really.

"Well then, Lunaria! I'll be back! I don't know how long I'll be staying here, but as long as I am, I'll look forward to watching this child's growth with great interest!"

"Yes, please come again."

"Of course! I'll definitely be back! Well then! Farewell! FAHAHAHAHAHAHA!"

Laughing loudly, Kirishisu departed. It was quite the grand farewell.

That was how that person came into the world.

He was blessed by all. He was loved. And that is why I...

No, I'll save that for later.

If I don't tell this in order, it will only cause confusion.

For now, the Dragon World was filled with happiness. Relations with the Demon World were improving smoothly. There were no signs of conflict with the other worlds. Thanks to Kirishisu Karishisu, research on monsters and teleportation had progressed dramatically. It was an era of peace.

Until that day.

Yes, one day, that era of peace came to an abrupt end.

Yes, that day...

That nightmare of a day.

I remember it clearly.

On that day, I was with Lord Dragon God, visiting the Demon World. As usual, I attended a meeting, and afterward, Necross Lacross guided me through the Demon World as we discussed future plans.

The topics were the exchange of more personnel and the nearly completed teleportation magic circle. Once the teleportation circle was finished, we might finally understand the cause of the teleportation incidents—or at the very least, it would allow people who had been accidentally transported to other worlds to return home safely. Even if it wasn't a complete solution, it would resolve a major issue. A ray of hope was in sight.

When I reported this to Lord Dragon God, a rare thing happened—The one who seldom smiled gave me a relieved smile and praised me.

"You've done well, Laplace. If not for you, this would have taken much longer. As expected of my son."

I was overjoyed.

At that moment, I must have been overflowing with confidence. I stood tall with pride, spread my wings wide, and declared to the world—That I was one of the Five Dragon Generals.

However, aahhh...

I was struck down from that happy state.

I returned to the Dragon World with Lord Dragon God. I headed home to report the events to Lady Lunaria.

To my beloved home.

Hehe, by then, I no longer felt like a mere guest. I considered myself a part of this household. That's why I said it—

"I'm home."

Ah, but...

Ah...

I still see that scene in my dreams. Every time I sleep, I dream of it. Yes, I said it—I'm home. But there was no reply. Instead of a response, I heard a sound. The sound of a baby wailing. A scream so loud it could only be called a shriek. Under normal circumstances, I wouldn't have thought anything of it. Babies cry, after all. Even the Young Master cried often. But that time, I had a bad feeling. Something about that cry felt different.

I hurried to Lady Lunaria's room...

And I saw it.

A room drenched in blood.

Countless corpses.

A scene of carnage.

And in the deepest part of that scene lay the last thing I ever wanted to see.

It was Lady Lunaria.

Lady Lunaria lay there, drenched in blood.

Curled up, in the center of the room... dead.

The baby, sobbed with tears streaming down its tiny face, still cradled in her protection.

Chapter 15: Funeral

Lord Dragon God laid eyes upon Lady Lunaria's death and let out a voiceless cry.

"Oooh... oooooh..."

His eyes widened, his mouth hung open, and he scanned the room with an expression of disbelief.

I did the same.

I couldn't believe the scene before me. Lady Lunaria was dead. Covered in blood. The one who had accepted me—dead.

By whom? For what reason? It made no sense.

She wasn't the kind of person to harbor enemies. Everyone in the Dragon World loved her. The thought of anyone wanting to kill her was unthinkable. But the baby was crying. Wailing, almost screaming. A cry of someone who had lost something irreplaceable. Lord Dragon God's child was crying. That alone brought me back to reality.

"Ooooh..."

I looked at Lord Dragon God. He wore an expression I had never seen before. He let out a sound I had never heard before.

Anger, sorrow, indignation.

A face twisted with every emotion imaginable.

Confusion, anxiety, shock.

A groan filled with all those emotions intertwined. I had never seen Lord Dragon God so overcome with emotions. He crouched down, lifting Lady Lunaria in his right arm and cradling the Young Master in his left.

Lady Lunaria had likely not died instantly. Her body was covered in wounds. The fatal injuries alone were horrible—one to the neck, three to the chest, two to the stomach, eight to the back. It was brutal.

A person would die long before suffering that much, yet she had been struck in vital spots over and over again. Even though Lady Lunaria was of human lineage, she carried the blood of a God. She was kind and full of compassion, someone utterly unrelated to battle.

And yet, even she must have resisted fiercely.

Even after suffering fatal wounds, she must have stood up again and again, facing her attackers. For what reason? That much was obvious. She had curled up like a shield—To protect someone.

To protect Lord Dragon God's child, her own son.

For that reason, Lady Lunaria fought back and was mercilessly slaughtered. And definitely, she succeeded. The deep wounds on her back and the fact that the Young Master was alive proved it. The culprit had failed to finish him off and fled.

"Why...?"

Lord Dragon God muttered under his breath. With those words, he reaffirmed the reality before him. Perhaps he was thinking the same thing as I was—That someone had cruelly taken Lady Lunaria's life.

"WHYYYYYYYY!?"

His roar shook the house, the entire town, even the mountains.

"WHO KILLED HEEEEEEEEEER!?"

His killing intent spread across the entire Dragon World. Every living creature trembled in fear. They felt the wrath of a God and quaked in terror. From the smallest lizards to the mightiest dragons—even the Dragonfolk.

I was no exception.

My whole body shook, and I collapsed on the spot. Even knowing I wasn't responsible; I couldn't suppress my fear.

"AAAAAAAHHHHHH!"

A flash of light extended from Lord Dragon God's body. To me, it looked like nothing more than light—But it was a fist.

A fist carrying all his uncontainable rage passed right by my side. When I turned around, a massive hole had been blasted into the house. Beyond it, the town of Chaos stretched endlessly. And even farther in the distance, another hole had been punched through the landscape. A crater.

The force of his strike had pierced through the solid rock of Dragon Roar Mountain and shot outward. I'm embarrassed to say this, but... I leaked a little at that moment.

Because if that blow had been just a bit off, I wouldn’t still be here.

And had Lord Dragon God stormed out of the house, it wouldn’t have been strange for him to destroy everything in his path.

"....."

But he didn’t.

Because there was one person who felt no fear.

The Young Master.

The moment he was lifted into Lord Dragon God’s left arm, he had stopped crying. Sniffling, but looking up at him—As if saying, "You’re finally here. Now I’m safe."

"....."

Lord Dragon God looked at the child and calmed, if only slightly. At least one thing still remained for him to protect... I guess he understood that.

"Laplace."

He called my name.

"Yes, I am here!"

"Summon the Five Dragon Generals. Find the culprit."

"YES!"

I couldn’t ask what he intended to do once the culprit was found. I couldn’t ask whether we should investigate why this had happened. Lord Dragon God was enraged. More than he’d ever been before. And he had given the order to summon the Five Dragon Generals and track down the culprit.

There was nothing to do but obey.

The Five Dragon Generals gathered immediately. Of course we did. It was a direct summons from Lord Dragon God—Nothing could take priority over that. It would be strange if we didn’t gather, especially when Lady Lunaria had been killed.

"What...? Lady Lunaria...?"

Upon hearing the details, the other Dragon Generals all lowered their heads with solemn expressions. There was no one in the Dragon World who disliked Lady Lunaria. And thinking about how Lord Dragon God had lost someone so dear to him, we couldn't help but feel immense sorrow.

"Lady Lunaria's body had countless wounds. It was clear that someone had inflicted them."

I was the one who explained the situation. Lord Dragon God had remained silent until all the Five Dragon Generals had assembled. He seemed to have calmed down somewhat since the incident at his home, but a menacing aura still seeped from his presence.

Once I finished my explanation, Lord Dragon God spoke.

"Find the culprit and bring him before me."

All Five Dragon Generals trembled at the sound of his voice. We shuddered at his words. Lord Dragon God was radiating pure fury. None of us had ever seen him like this before. Not even when one of the Five Dragon Generals, Crystal, had been killed had he been this enraged.

"We will, without fail!"

The eyes of all the Five Dragon Generals burned with determination. If it was an order from Lord Dragon God, we would go to the depths of hell itself. Lord Dragon God's anger was our anger as well. We swore to find the one who had killed Lady Lunaria.

"Go."

"Yes, sir!"

At Lord Dragon God's command, the other members of the Five Dragon Generals dispersed across the Dragon World. Each of them would search for the culprit in their own way.

I, too, intended to investigate in my own manner.

"Laplace, stay."

But Lord Dragon God stopped me.

I was surprised.

After all, I possessed a Demon Eye. I could see the traces left at the crime scene. Such traces wouldn't vanish immediately, but with time, the culprit could escape far away. No one was more suited for this task than me.

I had even captured the culprit responsible for Crystal’s murder.

"Why? I, too, want to avenge Lady Lunaria...!"

However, I had a more important role to play.

"Prepare a funeral for Lunaria, please."

At that moment, I finally understood that Lord Dragon God wasn’t just angry. He was grieving.

It was obvious in hindsight. But to be honest, I had never really understood Lord Dragon God's feelings. I hadn’t thought he loved Lady Lunaria that much. He had always seemed indifferent. It had felt like he kept a certain distance from her. But that wasn’t true.

Lord Dragon God had loved Lady Lunaria. The way he expressed his love might have been different from others, though.

"Understood."

I bowed deeply, and Lord Dragon God quietly said, "I’m counting on you."

Funerals in the Dragon World were a little unique.

First, the deceased was lifted by their closest family member. Normally, this would be a spouse, sibling, or parent, but if the deceased had no family, a friend, colleague, or superior might take on the role.

The deceased is carried from their home or the place where they died and brought to the center of town. At the center of town stood an altar. An altar to ensure the dead would be reborn safely. There, those closest to the deceased offered prayers.

I don’t remember the exact words, but the prayer was a wish for them to be reborn under Lord Dragon God's protection in their next life. After the prayer, the procession moves to the edge of the town.

They would walk a full circle around the town, keeping their left hand toward the outer edge. Following this custom, Lord Dragon God carried Lady Lunaria, and I carried the Young Master, as we walked around the town.

Anyone who saw us carrying the deceased stretched the palms of their hands straight out and crossed them in front of their chest.

When honoring the living, one clenches their fists.

When honoring the dead, one does not.

That was the Dragonfolk's salute.

Normally, people only performed the salute when they saw the deceased pass. But for Lady Lunaria's funeral, nearly every Dragonfolk had gathered around the inner area of the town. Everyone loved Lady Lunaria. Everyone wanted to see her one last time.

After completing the circle, we entered a small, round building. It was made of stone. Its walls were engraved with countless names. Inside the building, many stone tablets bore inscriptions as well. All of them carried the names of those who had died in the Dragon World.

As Lord Dragon God carried Lady Lunaria inside, someone approached him immediately. His wings were tattered, and his body was missing many scales. He was an old man.

The Dragonfolk had long lifespans, but they were not immortal. All who were born must eventually die. He looked upon Lady Lunaria's face and his expression became solemn.

"To think... that Lady Lunaria has passed... to think... to think..."

Muttering those words, he wept as he carved her name into a stone monument using a dragon bone chisel. Normally, names were inscribed on the walls in order. But for someone as special as Lady Lunaria, her name was carved onto a stone monument instead. Naturally, Crystal's name was also inscribed there. This was a burial site. The Dragonfolk's cemetery. A place to ensure the dead were never forgotten.

The old man received Lady Lunaria from Lord Dragon God and carried her deeper into the building. I walked behind him with Lord Dragon God. There, at the far end, was a dark pit. A hole so deep, it seemed to lead to another world. Of course, it did not. This hole led to the peak of Dragon Roar Mountain—In other words, to the sky.

"May this soul find peace, may the next life bring fortune, pray that this person may they return to this mountain and serve once more under Lord Dragon God—"

The old man recited a long prayer. I don't remember the exact words, either. However, it was even longer than the ritual that was recited in the center of town. After finishing his prayer, the old man gently placed Lady Lunaria's remains beside the hole.

Normally, the body would be dropped into the hole, marking the end of the funeral. The hole led to the sky. If a body emerged from it, it would be devoured by a Red Dragon, a Blue Dragon, or perhaps even by the giant black serpent lurking below.

The Dragonfolk had no fixed lifespan, but even they could die outside of battle. In the past, such a death was considered disgraceful. Dying in battle for the sake of the Lord Dragon God—that was deemed honorable. But the Lord Dragon God did not see it that way. He believed that all Dragonfolk were equal under him. Thus, he devised this method of burial.

For those who died of age or illness, he granted them the same end as a warrior would. And their names would be engraved as great warriors. They had lived and died for the Dragonfolk. However, that funeral was not appropriate for Lady Lunaria.

Therefore, after that, a funeral following the customs of the Humans was performed. Lord Dragon God lifted Lady Lunaria’s body and returned to his residence. There, in the garden beside the estate, he laid Lady Lunaria’s remains to rest. With a solemn expression, he conjured flames from his hands which enveloped Lady Lunaria’s body. In an instant, her body was consumed by fire, leaving behind only pure white bones and ash.

Together with Lord Dragon God, we buried those bones and ashes in the earth and planted a small sapling above them.

This was the funeral custom of the humans.

Is it a bit different from how it's done now? But back then, this was the burial method known in the Dragon World. When living beings die, they sometimes transform into monsters. To prevent this, the body is burned and buried in the ground. And then a tree was planted over the burial site. The tree would absorb the power of the deceased and grow. As long as the tree lived, the living would never forget the dead. A method of mourning befitting the humans, who cannot outlive the trees.

"Lunaria... I met her through an introduction from the Human God."

As we dug a hole for Lady Lunaria’s burial, Lord Dragon God told me the story of how they met. I simply listened in silence to his words.

"At first, it was just an experiment. Could different races produce offspring together? If they could, what kind of power would that child possess? It was all for the sake of the people of the worlds."

"Many experiments had been conducted... but one day, the Human God posed a question: What would happen if two Gods had a child?"

"And so, Lunaria was brought before me. She was the daughter of the Human God. Since Gods are all male, none of them could bear children."

"I did not love Lunaria. But she devoted herself to the Dragon World. She used her power as the daughter of a God to enrich this world."

"To me, all Dragonfolk were like my children. I cherished each and every one of them and wished for their happiness."

"But the moment a child was born, Lunaria became special to me."

"At the time, I hadn't realized it... but before I knew it, I had fallen in love with her."

Lord Dragon God spoke with a nostalgic expression. Lady Lunaria must have always been the same. A woman full of kindness and compassion. And she had directed that love towards Lord Dragon God as well.

"Laplace."

"Yes."

"I don't think I can forgive the one who killed Lunaria. My body trembles with a rage I have never felt before."

"Yes."

"Even if it means making an enemy of another world, will you stand by my side?"

"You need not even ask. Not just me—every one of the Five Dragon Generals will follow you to the end. Even if it means our destruction."

Lord Dragon God stood up in silence. His eyes were sharp as blades, and his presence brimmed with killing intent. There was no sadness left.

I felt afraid.

Even though his wrath was not directed at me.

There was no creature in any world that would not be terrified of that presence.

And thus, his revenge began.

It had begun.

"Master..."

When Laplace came to his senses, Rostelina was standing right in front of him. She looked at him with concern.

"Hm? What's wrong, Rostelina? The story isn't over yet. Can't you bear to listen any longer?"

"No, that's not it. Please, continue your story... But Lord Laplace, wouldn't it be best if you took a short rest?"

"Why do you think that?"

"Because..."

Rostelina took a handkerchief from her pocket and touched Laplace's face. The cloth darkened as it absorbed something from his cheek. That's right—at some point, Laplace had begun to cry. Tears streamed from his eyes as he sobbed. His words had become incoherent, and by the end, he could barely articulate what he was saying.

"Ah... my apologies. Whenever I remember that time, I just can't help myself."

"Lord Laplace, you loved Lady Lunaria, didn't you?"

"Of course. She was my mother. We shared no blood, yet she was always by my side, watching over me. Whenever I returned home, she was there, smiling as she listened to me. She was a Goddess full of kindness... That such a person was murdered so cruelly... The fact that those days will never return... Even now, when I remember that day... Ugh.... Ugh..."

Laplace wept. He covered his eyes with one hand, lowered his head, and trembled, sobbing quietly. Rostelina silently watched the large man, who was twice her size, as he cried.

She was bewildered. She had never seen Laplace cry before. But after a moment, she hurried to the kitchen, filled a glass with water, and returned. Gently, she stroked Laplace's back and offered him the glass.

"Hehe... Thank you, Rostelina. Now that I think about it, you've brought me a lot of comfort. I haven't lived with anyone in a long time, so I'm happy."

"No, It's fine, Master. There's no need to thank me. After all, you saved me as well."

"I see... Then let’s just say it’s the same for the both of us."

Laplace said this as he adjusted his posture on the chair. His eyes were red and swollen, but the tears had stopped. There was no more sobbing; his voice was once again clear.

"Now then, let’s continue the story. I apologize, but I may end up crying again from here on out."

"That’s fine. I’ll keep the water ready for you."

"Hahaha, you’re quite considerate... Well then—"

Laplace rubbed his eyes and gazed into the void once more.

Recalling a distant past—one he wished he could forget.

Chapter 16: The Wrath of the Dragon God

The search for the culprit had begun.

For me, every major incident always started with the hunt of a perpetrator.

Well, this was only the second time, though.

Now then, someone had infiltrated the Dragon World, slipped past the Dragonfolk's watchful eyes, made their way to Lord Dragon God's mansion, and killed Lady Lunaria—and ultimately, even tried to kill the Young Master. Do you think it would be difficult to find them?

No, it's much easier than searching for a single Demon lurking somewhere in the Dragon World. After all, the circumstances were incredibly specific. Unlike the Crystal incident, this happened in broad daylight, in the middle of the town. On top of that, I had the power of my Demon Eye. There was no way the evidence wouldn't pile up.

And just like that, the proof came together.

So easily—so effortlessly—it was almost laughable.

It was hard to believe that someone who had slain the most revered person in the Dragon World, Lady Lunaria, could have been so careless. It was baffling that they hadn’t even tried to cover their tracks at the scene. Even if they had attempted to conceal themselves, the method was so crude that a little effort was enough to expose it. I didn’t even need my Demon Eye. I should have questioned that fact more.

But unfortunately, when things go smoothly, people rarely stop to wonder why. When you follow the correct steps, success is a given—or so I thought. Now that the evidence was gathered, the list of suspects had narrowed down. Yet, when I saw the final list, I was left speechless. I re-examined the evidence, checked it again and again. But no matter how many times I went over it; the list of suspects did not change. And once the investigation was nearly complete, a meeting was called.

"So, this is the list of suspects?"

The Five Dragon Generals gathered in the conference room where Lord Dragon God awaited, each presenting their findings.

Every single one of us had arrived at the same conclusion.

Yes, we all had the same names on our lists.

Four names were written there:

- Pudoria Doldia
- Nartakiel
- Enpadon Ballard
- Kirishisu Karishisu

The first three names probably don’t sound familiar to you. But with that last one, you might have started to realize something. Yes, they were all people from the other worlds.

And at the same time, they were the engineers I had spent years negotiating with and invited into the Dragon World.

"They had been gathering at a certain building for meetings in the days leading up to Lady Lunaria’s murder. On the day she was believed to have been killed, several witnesses saw them behaving suspiciously in the town. Moreover, after that day, they vanished without a trace."

"....."

Szilard’s explanation matched my own findings. But I didn’t want to believe it. There was no way they would do such a thing. They had come to the Dragon World for its sake. They had come for the sake of peace between worlds... or so I thought. Yet, I had nothing to refute the so-called "evidence" laid out before me.

You think Kirishisu Karishisu being close friends to Lady Lunaria should be proof of her innocence? No, no, it’s quite the opposite. One could argue that she got close to her precisely because she was planning this incident.

"What's wrong, Laplace? You look pale."

At Szilard’s words, my wings trembled. If they really were responsible for the crime, then it wouldn’t be strange for me to be suspected as well. They could say that I had planned Lady Lunaria’s assassination—that I had brought them into the Dragon World for that very purpose. And I had no words to deny it. Even if I had no such intentions, the fact remained that I was the one who had brought them here. Seeing my distress, Szilard spoke.

"Laplace, we do not suspect you."

Those words were meant to reassure me.

Looking around, I saw that the other Dragon Generals were also looking at me with the same expression as Szilard. It was a gaze of reassurance.

"You are the one who owes the greatest debt to Lady Lunaria. Your loyalty to Lord Dragon God is unquestionable. There is no way you would have caused this tragedy."

"...Thank you."

Along with relief, I felt a sense of pride. To be treated as a trusted comrade by these noble Dragon Generals—there was no greater honor.

"Most likely, you were used. The culprit must have known what you were doing, approached you, and planned to pin all the blame on you while taking Lady Lunaria's life."

"But... why would they target Lady Lunaria?"

More than anything, I wanted to understand the reason.

Who had done this?

For what purpose had they killed Lady Lunaria?

Why had they tried to kill the Young Master?

I needed to know.

"...This is just speculation, but those from other worlds likely do not want the Dragon World to grow any stronger. Especially since Lord Dragon God married a Human Goddess and bore a child. They must have seen that as a threat."

"And why would that be a threat?"

"Don't you see? Humans may be the weakest race, but their cultural development speed is unmatched. Meanwhile, we Dragonfolk, though slow in developing culture, are the strongest species in individual strength. If the bond between Humans and Dragonfolk grows stronger, we could surpass all other worlds and seize dominance."

"That's absurd! Are you saying that they think Lord Dragon God and the Human God are plotting to rule over all the worlds!?"

"Would it be so strange if someone believed that?"

Szilard's reasoning didn't sit right with me. At the very least, the Gods I had encountered only cared about their own worlds. Some of them had been wary of others due to past conflicts, but none had seriously sought war.

They had to know that such an act would not go unanswered. Yet, I couldn’t deny that there was some logic to it. As long as the worlds remained equal, things would be fine. But if a clear disparity arose, this balance would not last. Those at the top might begin to look down on those below, treating them as slaves.

If someone had struck first to prevent that, then perhaps it made sense.

"But if that was their goal, then killing Lady Lunaria was a poor move. It accomplishes nothing!"

"That’s true... which means the real target wasn’t Lady Lunaria. Their true objective was likely the Young Master."

"What do you mean?"

"The Young Master would be the king and ruler of both the Dragonfolk and the Humans... No, rather, the God of the next generation."

The title of "Son of Lord Dragon God" ensured the loyalty and command of the Dragonfolk.

The title of "Son of Lady Lunaria" ensured the loyalty and command of the Humans.

There was a possibility of the Dragonfolk and the Humans uniting under the Young Master’s command. That is why they sought to kill him. However, Lady Lunaria resisted far more than expected... and they failed to finish the job. Of course, the possibility of killing Lady Lunaria was considered from the start. Even if they succeeded in assassinating the Young Master, it would be meaningless if she bore a second one.

"The reason doesn’t matter."

The one who interrupted my conversation with Szilard was Lord Dragon God. After scanning the list in front of him, he fixed his gaze on Szilard with a piercing stare and spoke.

"Szilard, what is this?"

"Huh? ...Ah, it's the list of suspects, sir."

"What exactly did I order you to do?"

"To find the perpetrator... Ah."

Szilard realized his mistake.

Lord Dragon God had ordered us to find the culprit—not suspects. In other words, we had failed to complete our mission. Under normal circumstances, Lord Dragon God wouldn't have bothered to point out such a minor error.

But this time was different.

The killing intent emanating from him made it clear—if we didn't bring the culprit before him immediately, he would tear us apart himself.

"My deepest apologies!"

Szilard immediately bowed in the most formal manner possible. With a resolute expression, he made his declaration to Lord Dragon God.

"I will set out at once across all worlds, find the culprit, and drag him here!"

"Wait."

As Szilard was about to dash out of the conference room, Lord Dragon God's sharp gaze stopped him in his tracks.

Szilard was trembling.

Lord Dragon God had been truly, deeply enraged this whole time. No one could endure his glare head-on and remain unshaken. Not even the Five Dragon Generals.

"Szilard, the culprit is on this list, correct?"

"Yes, sir! I believe the probability is high!"

Lord Dragon God seemed to be deep in thought. Was he contemplating another motive for Lady Lunaria's murder? Or was he considering a method to uncover the culprit? Whatever it was, the answer didn't come immediately. For a while, he simply sat there, his presence radiating a fury capable of burning everything to ash, his ice-cold gaze scanning the list. As if vowing never to forget the names written there, even in death.

"Hmm."

Eventually, Lord Dragon God lifted his head as if something had caught his attention. Had he figured something out? We all turned to look at him expectantly. However, his sharp gaze wasn't on us.

He was looking behind us.

"What do you want?"

It was only when Lord Dragon God spoke that we realized—

A man stood in the room.

His presence was so faint that it was impossible to tell whether he was truly there or not. The very space around him seemed slightly distorted. As if he always stood in a blind spot.

"Is it really so strange that I came?"

His aura was different from the last time we met. Somewhere in it, I sensed anger. And it was only natural.

"Did you really think I would remain silent after my daughter was murdered?"

That’s right—he was the Human God.

Lady Lunaria’s father.

"You're going to take revenge, aren't you? Please, allow me to join you. We Humans may lack strength, but we have wisdom."

"....."

"I beg you. Let me help. Is that unacceptable?"

"...No, your assistance would be valuable."

"Then show me the list."

Without waiting for permission, the Human God picked up the list from the table and examined it. He rested his hand on his chin, as if deep in thought.

"Hmm... As I suspected, these four worlds..."

"Do you recognize something?"

I couldn't help but ask. The Human God turned toward me, as if he had been waiting for that question.

"Yes. You're aware that these four worlds have always been in conflict, correct?"

"Yes."

"But at some point, they suddenly became eerily quiet."

"That's..."

"Yes, it was thanks to you, Laplace... Because of your bravery in becoming the bridge between the worlds, paths were opened between them."

Hearing his praise, I instinctively puffed out my chest with pride.

But his next words shattered that.

"However, because of that, the research on monsters and teleportation was exposed."

At those words, the other Dragon Generals visibly stiffened. I had no idea what he meant. Every world had been conducting research on monsters and teleportation. I was aware of that much. I had even had the opportunity to observe some of the Demon's studies firsthand on several occasions.

The Demons, in particular, focused heavily on monster research, though their teleportation studies were less advanced.

Even though they were thriving, no significant breakthroughs had been made—just a few byproducts, like new forms of magic. To be honest, at the time, I was ignorant of the extent of Dragon World's research. I had assumed it was on a similar level. I'd occasionally heard reports about "progress," but I had no idea what that actually entailed.

Now that I think about it, those reports must have been deliberately concealed to some extent... Well, I'll get into that later.

At this moment, I was still in the dark.

"They must have been shocked," he continued. "The Dragonfolk, who were believed to rely solely on brute force, had acquired such advanced technology... They may have started to suspect that the Dragonfolk were the mastermind behind the monsters and teleportation incidents."

"What exactly are you talking about!?"

No one answered my question. But Lord Dragon God and the other Dragon Generals all wore grim expressions. As if they had just received an answer they wished they hadn't.

"Why was Lunaria killed?"

"Lunaria must have learned the truth. About the 'thing' that they discovered. And at the same time, they found out that 'she knew'."

"....."

She had learned their secret, and they had realized it.

Given what that would mean for their future, it wouldn't be surprising if they decided to silence her. At the time, I didn't understand what they were talking about. Of course, I never once suspected that Lord Dragon God and the Five Dragon Generals were actually behind the monsters and teleportation. But still, I couldn't shake the feeling that something was off.

"I see. So those bastards spied on our research, assumed that we were responsible for the monsters and teleportation based on our progress, and even went so far as to kill Lunaria... and tried to take the life of my child as well."

Lord Dragon God spoke quietly. But his voice chilled the entire room. Those were terrifying words. It was as if his fury was seeping from his very mouth.

"...Don't fuck with me."

With those final words, Lord Dragon God stood up.

He squared his shoulders and walked toward the exit.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm starting from the top."

No one understood the meaning of those words.

Not me, not Szilard, not Dola, not Maxwell, not Kháos.

None of us understood. The state Lord Dragon God was in.

This was the same Lord Dragon God who had advocated for peace even after the Demons had killed Crystal. The same Lord Dragon God who had remained humble even in the meetings of the Gods.

Everyone believed that, despite his waves of rage, he must have been contemplating the future with profound foresight.

Perhaps, if someone had stopped him at that moment, the future would have taken a different course. But that was impossible. To us, the Five Dragon Generals, Lord Dragon God’s words and actions were absolute.

Do you understand what 'absolute' means?

It means that every word, every action Lord Dragon God made... was correct. It had always been that way. Lord Dragon God had never made a mistake. Everything he did was for the future of the Dragon World, always the right course of action.

So it was no surprise that none of the others noticed.

But I should have.

I was the closest to Lord Dragon God—yet also the one who had spent the least time by his side. I should have realized...

That even Lord Dragon God, in his anger, could lose his ability to judge things rationally...

Chapter 17: The Day a World Ended

The Beast World.

A place where an enormous forest stretches endlessly, and mountain ranges rise in succession. A world inhabited by people who resemble various animals.

Into this world, Lord Dragon God descended with the Five Dragon Generals.

"...Oh?"

When we arrived in the Beast World, we were greeted by an army of over ten thousand warriors.

It was night.

The Beastfolk Warriors were surrounding the shrine at the mountain's peak, their piercing and shining eyes were visible from within the forest as if they had been waiting for us.

"....."

At the time, we didn't fully understand what it meant.

Why had they gathered around the mountain?

Why did they look at us with such murderous intent?

We didn't even think to question it. We were Dragonfolk. A race of warriors. All we could do was accept the hostility and killing intent directed at us. These creatures were our enemies. They had killed Lady Lunaria. That was why they had gathered like this—to confront us as we came for revenge.

Perhaps, if we had looked closer, we would have noticed the expressions of shock on the faces of the Beastfolk. A look of astonishment, as if an unexpected foe had arrived. But at the time, such a detail was nothing more than a fleeting sense of unease.

"Bring out the one who killed Lunaria!"

Lord Dragon God's voice rang out over the stunned Beastfolk. It was a voice filled with rage. A voice so terrifying that even we, the Five Dragon Generals, trembled. It echoed across the entire Beast World.

All the Beastfolk shuddered. They had just realized that they had drawn the gaze of a great, powerful, and absolute opponent.

"I don't know who!"

Yet, there was one among them who did not waver before Lord Dragon God's voice. Someone equal in status to Lord Dragon God.

Yes—the Beast God.

His appearance had changed since the last time I saw him. He was still a twin-headed beast. But he was no longer mounted on a white wolf. He stood on his own two feet. At the council meetings, he had always been seated atop that white wolf.

"Pudoria!"

The Beast God furrowed his brows at the name.

"Pudoria is with your people!"

"He disappeared!"

"Then I don’t know!"

"Are you hiding him!?"

"Are you making baseless accusations!?"

"If you won’t hand him over, I’ll crush this entire world!"

"If you think you can, then try!"

This was what it meant to have a conversation go nowhere. Looking back, had we talked more calmly here, perhaps battle could have been avoided...

But neither Lord Dragon God nor the Beast God sought diplomacy at that moment. They had only one thought—to find and kill their enemy.

"Fine, then!"

Lord Dragon God spread his wings.

The Beast God bared his fangs.

They took their stances.

The battle began.

For three days and three nights, the Five Dragon Generals and the Beastfolk army clashed. But, could it even be called a battle...?

Lord Dragon God fought the Beast God in a one-on-one duel, while we, the Five Dragon Generals, wiped out anything that tried to interfere.

The Beastfolk is a mighty race. They have a sharp sense of smell, eyes that can see clearly at night, and can move at full speed across the roughest terrain. And they wield magic using their voices. Their magic could shake an enemy's eardrums, sometimes killing them outright.

But they were no match for us, the Five Dragon Generals.

Our bodies could not be pierced by their claws, fangs, or weapons, and their voice-based magic was repelled.

When we struck the ground, mountains shattered.

When we swung our claws, forests were torn apart.

With a single blow, hundreds of Beastfolk were sent flying, killed instantly.

It was a massacre.

Five Dragonfolk slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Beastfolk. Perhaps if they had greater numbers and the collective strength to match us, they could have fought back. But not a single Beast Warrior managed to leave a scratch on us. The gap in power was overwhelming.

Even among the Beastfolk, there were warriors who were considered Escorts of their God, like us, the Five Dragon Generals... but they were no match. As we wiped out the Beastfolk, Lord Dragon God and the Beast God fought. As a species, Lord Dragon God's power was far greater. But as Gods, they were equals.

The Beast God did not fall behind. Their speed was beyond comprehension, making it impossible to describe their battle in detail.

The sheer velocity of their movements created constant shockwaves, generating winds that gave rise to multiple tornadoes. These tornadoes tore through the blood-drenched land, sucking up everything in their path, showering the Beast World with fallen trees and a rain of blood.

The Beast God's primary weapons were his claws and fangs. With an earth-shaking roar, he lunged at Lord Dragon God with lightning speed. But his fangs could not pierce Lord Dragon God's scales.

Lord Dragon God, too, fought with claws and fangs. He countered, slashing with his claws and pummeling with his fists. But he could not tear through the Beast God's fur to damage his flesh.

Neither side could land a decisive blow. Yet the damage was slowly accumulating. On the morning of the fourth day... The battle was decided.

For a battle between Gods, the conclusion had come swiftly. When I saw them, the Beast God had his jaws locked onto Lord Dragon God's shoulders. His fangs had pierced Lord Dragon God's scales, and blood gushed forth. At last, the Beast God had landed a decisive blow. But that very attack... was exactly what Lord Dragon God had been waiting for.

Lord Dragon God seized the Beast God's right and left heads as they bit down on him. Cloaking his whole body in his Dragon Aura, he pulled them apart, one to the left, one to the right.

He tore them apart.

Tearing him cleanly in half.

Lord Dragon God slammed the Beast God, now cut in half, into the ground. There was a tremendous impact and a blinding flash. A surge of overwhelming energy swept across the Beast World.

I was blown away. Not just me—every single one of the Five Dragon Generals was sent flying.

"!"

I was blown away through the air and slammed into the ground, but I immediately sprang to my feet and took to the sky. What I saw was a massive crater.

"....."

Lord Dragon God slowly emerged from it. Spreading his wings, he ascended into the air. Then, he let out a roar that echoed across the entire world. A roar of unspeakable fury.

"GROAAAAHHHHH!"

That day, fear and hatred toward the Dragonfolk was seared into the hearts of every living being in the Beast World.

Lord Dragon God went on a rampage.

He rampaged, and rampaged, and rampaged until nothing was left.

"If you refuse to come out, then I'll destroy the entire world!"

Those words were not an empty threat. Ninety percent of the Beast World was reduced to ruins, and its collapse had begun. Nearly all living creatures in the Beast World perished. With destruction of this magnitude, Pudoria could not have survived. That level of devastation left no room for doubt.

"...Laplace, I leave the rest to you."

Perhaps satisfied by the sight of the disintegrating Beast World, Lord Dragon God returned to the Dragon World.

Before leaving, he handed me a single gemstone. A bloodstained gemstone. The moment I held it, I understood. It was a divine gemstone imbued with the power of a God. With it, crossing the "Boundary" was possible.

For now, let's call it the God Gem.

It was likely extracted when Lord Dragon God killed the Beast God.

"....."

Holding the God Gem, I was bewildered.

He left me in charge and told me to see things through—but what exactly was I supposed to do? The survivors fled, desperately searching for safety. But with the world itself on the verge of collapse, where could they possibly go? It was nothing but a pitiful sight.

As a result of Lord Dragon God's rampage, the Beast World was doomed. Was I meant to hunt down the remaining survivors?

No, I was given no such order.

I could clearly sense the emotions of the fleeing Beastfolk. They didn't want to die. They wanted to survive. Yet the world was crumbling with every passing moment. Even without my intervention, their extinction was inevitable. They would be swallowed by the collapsing world, all I could do was watch them flee, unable to act. And in my heart, a question lingered.

Was this level of destruction truly necessary?

Did everything have to be obliterated?

The moment the Beast God fell, the battle was decided. We never did figure out where Pudoria disappeared to, but was this massacre really the only option? Was there no other way? Not all Beastfolk were guilty. I desperately tried to push that thought aside.

Lord Dragon God must have had a reason. There had to be some deeper meaning behind it, at least that’s what I thought.

Even doubting him felt like a sin.

"...Good grief."

And then, someone spoke to me.

At some point, he had appeared behind me. I had no idea when he arrived or how he got so close. When I turned, I saw a God whose face refused to stay in my memory.

Yes, it was the Human God.

"How tragic."

As if peering directly into my heart, he spoke. No, perhaps he really had seen through me. Even now, his powers remain a mystery.

"Even if there was suspicion that they killed Lunaria, that doesn’t mean all of them were guilty."

"....."

"I’m sure most of them probably didn’t even know what was happening. By the time they realized, their God was dead. By the time they understood, their world was ending. All they have is despair. They did nothing, they understood nothing..."

Standing behind me, gazing at the fleeing Beastfolk, the Human God whispered those words.

For a moment, I thought he was condemning me. For simply watching. For failing to stop this tragedy. But no—it was something else.

After a brief silence, he muttered:

"Still, this is far too cruel..."

When I turned to face him, the Human God gave me a slow, gentle and knowing smile.

"Don’t tell the Dragon God, alright?"

With those parting words, the Human God vanished before my eyes. What was he planning? Where had he gone? I wasn’t sure.

But soon, I noticed something. The fleeing people were all moving in the same direction. A single, unified direction. The direction Lord Dragon God had disappeared to.

Were they seeking revenge on him?

But Lord Dragon God had long since returned to the Dragon World. They couldn’t cross the Boundary. And yet, they were heading there. To the place we had come from. To the shrine that allowed one to cross the world’s boundary. And one by one, they vanished into it. Into a shrine that only Gods should have been able to use.

Well, with the God Gem, I could have used it too. Regardless, the Human God made his move. The Human God saved the remaining Beastfolk. By transferring them from their collapsing world to his own—the Human World.

"....."

Perhaps Lord Dragon God intended to annihilate the entire Beastfolk race. As one of the Five Dragon Generals, maybe I should have followed suit. Perhaps I should have condemned the actions of the Human God.

But I couldn't.

For me, it was enough that Lady Lunaria's death had been avenged. I never intended to destroy the Beast World to this extent. So I simply stood by and watched as the Human God carried out his actions. Until the very moment the last of the Beastfolk were transferred to the Human World.

To be honest, at that time, I was even moved. How merciful this God was. Even though his own world was already burdened, he still extended his compassion to the Beastfolk. Even though it was possible that the Beastfolk had deliberately planned Lady Lunaria's assassination.

I don't intend to speak ill of Lord Dragon God. I too felt deep sorrow and anger over Lady Lunaria's death. But at the same time, I would have liked him to show some measure of generosity and mercy.

Of course, I had no intention of making such a demand of Lord Dragon God directly. Even now, when I reflect on Lord Dragon God's state of mind back then, I can see that, to some extent, his actions were inevitable.

Still, I wished he had granted the Beastfolk even a sliver of salvation.

I had developed a small attachment to them, having engaged in minor exchanges and trade of engineers and Dragon Warriors. And that's why, I just wanted a little mercy for them.

And yet, it was not Lord Dragon God who granted them that mercy—it was the Human God. Seeing him act, I believed, without the slightest doubt, that he was a God truly worthy of trust.

Never realizing that it was all part of his scheme.

Regardless, thus the Beast World was destroyed.

The few remaining Beastfolk were accepted into the Human World. Only a few percent survived, yet even that accounted for a significant portion of the global population. I didn't know the exact number, but it was far from insignificant. Even so, the Human God took them in as refugees.

Conversely, over 90% of the Beastfolk had perished.

Including their Beast God.

It was the greatest catastrophe in the history of the Six Worlds.

And yet, that catastrophe was nothing more than the prologue to the horrors that would follow.

Chapter 18: The Research on Teleportation

Lord Dragon God went from world to world, destroying them one after another. The Sea World, the Sky World...

Both worlds were crushed without hesitation.

The destruction of the Beast World had already stirred a strong sentiment across the other worlds—"The Dragon World must not be forgiven." At the time, I had no way of knowing, but they, too, had their own reasons to fight. And there was no reason “not to fight”.

By the time we arrived, both the Sea and Sky Worlds had already assembled their armies, waiting for us.

The Seafolk had gathered a force so vast it darkened the ocean pitch black.

The Skyfolk had amassed a force so great it blotted out the sun.

But to us, the Five Dragon Generals, such forces meant nothing.

The battles were a repeat of the one with the Beasfolk. We, the Five Dragon Generals, swept away the resistance. Lord Dragon God annihilated their gods, vented his fury upon their worlds, and their worlds collapsed. The few survivors were taken in by the Human God, finding refuge in the Human World. Victory after victory.

But that didn't mean we were unscathed.

The endless battles had worn down our bodies and diminished our strength. Especially Lord Dragon God—his body was in shambles.

The bite wounds from the Beast God still bled. The poison from the Sea God continued to eat away at one of his legs. The Aurora Blast from the Sky God had plunged one of his eyes into darkness.

The Dragonfolk were the strongest species—there was no doubt about that. But the six Gods were equal in power.

Even if we, their descendants, had slight differences in growth, the Gods themselves had been equal from birth. The Five Dragon Generals were covered in wounds, but not to the point of being unable to fight.

After all, there were still more worlds left. Yes... the world inhabited by a race said to be equal in power to the Dragonfolk.

The Demon World.

I hesitated.

If we fought the Demon World, we wouldn't emerge unscathed. This time, one of the Five Dragon Generals might fall. Perhaps even Lord Dragon God himself would perish. Was it right to continue fighting like this? Did the Demon World need to be destroyed as well? Should we really fight them?

It wasn't that I had any particular fondness for the Demon World. If anything, I could even say I despised it. That world had rejected me, after all. But having witnessed the destruction of the Beast World, the Sea World, and the Sky World, I had begun to feel a strong sense of aversion.

Was this really necessary?

A world collapsing. People fleeing in terror. Their faces, twisted in despair. If we lost, the same fate would await the Dragon World. No, perhaps something even worse.

The Dragonfolk would scatter, trying to escape their crumbling world. But would there be any world willing to take them in? The Human World? Ah... the Human God—perhaps he would try to accept the Dragonfolk. That God had been supporting us, the Dragonfolk. The Humans were essentially our ally. Even if we lost, they would likely protect and aid the survivors.

But the Human World already housed the three races we had destroyed. I had heard that they had been given land, their numbers had grown, and they had even begun to establish their own territories. They would never forget the suffering, the pain, and the humiliation they had endured. If Dragonfolk refugees fled to the Human World, it was clear what would happen—they would be wiped out.

Of course, I had no intention of losing. I would not let the Dragon World suffer such a fate. But our enemy was the Demons. There was a chance we could lose. I was torn. Should I stop Lord Dragon God, or not? Honestly, I wanted Lord Dragon God to calm down, for the Human God to intervene and mediate a peace. After all, we hadn't even identified Lady Lunaria's true murderer yet.

Shouldn't we settle down and investigate that first? Wouldn't it be best to just stop all of this? Is that what you think?

Yes... I thought the same.

That's what I should have done.

But at the time, I truly, truly blindly worshiped Lord Dragon God.

Of course, I still revere him now... but back then, I couldn't even conceive of the idea that he might be wrong.

And there was also my position as one of the Five Dragon Generals. We were expected to be the most loyal to Lord Dragon God. We had to affirm his every decision. For one of the Five Dragon Generals to question Lord Dragon God's actions—such a thing was unthinkable. That's what I believed. And so, I hesitated.

As I watched Lord Dragon God and the Dragon Generals prepare for the next battle, I hesitated. I couldn't talk to anyone about it. Who could I even confide in? If Lady Lunaria had been alive, maybe she could have given me some wisdom. She was the only one in the Dragon World who could voice her opinions to Lord Dragon God. If she had lived, maybe this war never would have happened.

...And yet, her death was what triggered the war in the first place.

But she was gone now. I was cornered on all sides. I wrestled with my doubts, seeking solace in Saleyakt's company. But there was one person who noticed my inner turmoil.

Lady Dola.

One day, she invited me to her home.

Thinking back, it was the first time I had ever set foot inside her house. Her home was shockingly modest for one of the Five Dragon Generals. She had only a handful of attendants, and only the bare essentials in terms of possessions. Seeing those attendants... It made me feel strangely sorrowful. I almost forgot about them under the cover of Lady Lunaria's death, but her attendants were also killed.

In the deepest part of the house, there was a still young Perugius. He was at an age where he could barely open his eyes. No claws, no fangs, his scales sparse, and the wings on his back still small. That frail appearance stirred a strong sense of protectiveness in me. I don't think he had even developed self-awareness yet. As I looked at Perugius, Lady Dola spoke to me.

"You seem to have something on your mind."

Her voice was gentle. She was in no way trying to interrogate me. There was a softness to it, as if she were trying to console me. For just a moment, the relationship of teacher and student from the past returned.

I nearly burst into tears.

Since being chosen as one of the Five Dragon Generals, I had hardly spoken with Lady Dola. But she had always been watching over me.

"The truth is—"

Before I realized it, I had poured out everything in my heart. I was prepared to be accused of disrespect and punished on the spot.

"....."

Lady Dola listened quietly. No matter how much I raised my voice, she didn’t change her expression.

And after hearing me out, she spoke in a calm tone.

"It is understandable that you do not comprehend Lord Dragon God’s will..."

It was not a dismissive remark.

Rather, it sounded as though she regretted something.

"Come. I have something to show you."

With those words, Lady Dola stood up and left the house. I followed her without question. She continued walking in silence, moving outside the town. I didn’t ask where we were going and simply followed her. After about an hour, Lady Dola, who had been flying the whole time, landed on a mountain. It was an ordinary, nameless mountain.

She folded her wings and finally spoke.

"This is the place."

"What is this place?"

I asked, sounding like a fool. It was just a mountain to me. Lady Dola must have realized that simply landing here wouldn’t make it obvious. Without answering my question, she walked straight to a certain rock. Then, placing her hand on the rock, she began an incantation in a low voice.

"This is..."

When the incantation ended, the rock silently vanished.

Where the rock had been, a cave entrance appeared—just big enough for a person to pass through.

A hidden passage.

Without a word, Lady Dola stepped inside, and I followed. The cave led into a narrow tunnel. Though dimly lit, it was clear that the passage had been well-maintained. At the end of the tunnel, there was a room. It had been expanded from the original cave, but the ceiling was low, making it unsuitable for flying. Still, it was about the size of a house.

Inside, desks were lined up, and on top of them were various pieces of equipment and stacks of paper. And many Dragonfolk were present. Some sat at desks, others sat on the floor, while some stood and worked. Everyone was focused on their tasks.

"What is this place?"

"This is a teleportation research facility."

"Teleportation...?"

I had known that the Dragon World was researching teleportation magic. But I had no idea where, how, or to what extent.

And I was one of the Five Dragon Generals.

"Once you understand this place, your concerns will be eased."

With those words, Lady Dola started walking through the room.

"Everyone here is a researcher."

"Wow..."

I voiced my admiration as I observed them and then noticed something. Every single one of them had faded scales. Many had no wing membranes, and some had lost their fangs. Yes, to my surprise, they were all elderly.

"They’re all old, aren’t they?"

"Yes... Only Dragon Warriors nearing the end of their lifespan gather here."

I didn’t ask why at the time, but I had a vague idea. Teleportation magic is dangerous. A single failed experiment could wipe out an entire mountain. So, those who had little time left took on the research.

Of course, there were likely other reasons. Perhaps older individuals, being calmer than young, hot-blooded warriors, were simply better suited for research. In fact, similar things happened in other worlds.

In the Demon World, for example, long-lived races were generally not very intelligent, so research was often left to short-lived races.

"Everyone! Thank you for your hard work! Today, one of the Five Dragon Generals, the Demon Dragon King Laplace, is here for an inspection! No need to be nervous, just continue your research as usual!"

At Lady Dola's declaration, everyone stood at attention and gave me a powerful salute. Despite their age, they were still Dragon Warriors.

"Welcome, young one. Apologies for the lack of courtesy, but please take your time."

"...I will do just that."

After some hesitation, I responded formally. I was one of the Five Dragon Generals, but these people had served Lord Dragon God since before I was even born. They deserved my respect.

"Come, I will show you around."

I followed Lady Dola as she guided me through the facility. She gave me a simple explanation of the research being conducted. But to be honest, at the time, I had no idea what they were doing. Now, I am well-versed in magic. But back then, I didn't even know the basics. The elderly researchers were developing what would now be called magic circles. But to me, they looked like nothing more than strange scribbles.

Still, I tried to memorize the patterns. It was just a habit. Whenever I saw something new, I memorized it. That's how I had lived since coming to the Dragon World. I was curious about what they were doing. If I understood their goal, I believed that one day, I too would be able to reproduce it. I looked through a vast amount of past research materials, trying to catch up to them. Well, I didn't get anywhere. What they were doing wasn't something a beginner could understand just by glancing at it.

"You don't get it, do you?"

"No."

"I thought so. If you could understand in a few minutes, it would render the thousands of years of research they made as meaningless."

Looking back now, that place was a nest of out-of-place artifacts. The main focus of the research there was on manipulating space—specially, things like teleportation and summoning.

The Great Magic of the early days felt more like actual magic than mere Magical Techniques.

Even now, there are still many things I can't comprehend.

However, some of it had already been researched to a practical level. It was a mountain of wisdom inscribed on dragon-hide parchment. If even a single bundle of that had survived, the current magic system would have been drastically different.

That is—if there had been even one person capable of understanding it.

After that, Lady Dola demonstrated summoning magic. It was an ancient form of summoning magic. Ancient... but not all that different from what we have now. A technique to call forth living beings from another world.

What she summoned was a small fish that inhabited the Sea World. A powerless, ordinary fish.

The Sea World had already collapsed and was no longer habitable for people, but small creatures like these still seemed to exist.

At the same time, I recalled my first time visiting the Sea World. Now, I'm used to it, but when I first saw a fish, I was incredibly excited. To think that such creatures existed in other worlds.

You see, fish have such peculiar shapes, don't they? They can only live in water and they have such an odd form.

You don't think so? You say you can catch fish in the backyard pond?

I see...

Well, I spent a long time in a world without oceans... But even you would probably think a Blue Dragon looks strange, wouldn't you? They have a form that only allows them to live in the sky.

"Lord Dragon God chose not to make the results of his teleportation research known to the general public and the Dragonfolk. Do you know why?"

"...No."

"Out of consideration. Unlike monsters, there is no way to deal with teleportation. If made public, it would only cause unnecessary panic."

That's what Lady Dola said.

Of course, there were probably many other reasons as well. Perhaps he foresaw that research wouldn’t yield immediate results. If results weren’t achieved and casualties increased, the research team would inevitably face harsher scrutiny.

"Why... was I not informed?"

"Because you were appointed as one of the Five Dragon Generals under the premise that you would interact with other worlds."

I was shocked.

I had thought I stood on equal footing with the other four as one of the Five Dragon Generals. Yet I alone had been kept in the dark about this secret work. That meant... perhaps, even up to this very moment, they feared I might betray them... That’s what I thought.

"Don’t make that face. It wasn’t because we thought you’d betray us."

"Then why?"

"If the research into teleportation were to reveal the 'culprit' behind teleportation incidents or monster appearances, it would hinder with your work."

There are things better left unknown. Even back then, I understood that well. Some Demons had the ability to read minds, after all.

"There’s no need to be discouraged. I’ll explain everything in due time."

Lady Dola patted my shoulder and began talking about the research. Each of the Dragon Generals had been assigned research topics: teleportation, summoning, monsters, and barriers. Crystal had been in charge of teleportation research. Lady Dola had inherited that work. She was an expert in both summoning and teleportation.

"Summoning magic calls forth creatures from another world. Conversely, teleportation magic sends creatures to another world. Given this explanation, you must have realized—they are fundamentally the same thing."

"Creatures... Does that mean people cannot be summoned?"

"You can."

Lady Dola stated it plainly.

"That’s exactly why the engineers of other worlds misunderstood. They assumed we were using summoning and teleportation to throw the Six Worlds into disarray. In fact, if we wanted to do something like that, it wouldn’t be impossible."

"....."

"That’s why Lord Dragon God completely prohibited the summoning and teleportation of people."

Yes, Lord Dragon God had banned the summoning of people.

It was only natural. If a person from another world was summoned and then teleported elsewhere, it would effectively create a manufactured case of someone vanishing without a trace.

Thus, the fundamental summoning formulas had multiple restrictions attached into it, preventing the summoning of people. Those restrictions were buried deep within the spell formula, hidden beneath layers upon layers of encryption, turning it into a black box.

Even now, I have no way of deciphering it. Even if you can use summoning magic, that doesn't mean you can tamper with its roots. Most likely, the only one capable of unlocking that black box is Lady Dola herself.

"Not only that, but even the mere existence of teleportation and summoning was kept secret. Do you know why?"

"Because if the means exist, someone will inevitably use them?"

"Exactly. If we Dragonfolk believed it was necessary for Lord Dragon God, we would recklessly use it, bearing all consequences on ourselves."

I nodded at her words. It was simple. If someone got in Lord Dragon God’s way and he, for whatever reason, could not kill that person himself, then I would do it. Any consequences that followed would be attributed to my personal actions. If taking all the blame meant protecting Lord Dragon God, I would do so without hesitation.

That was why Lady Dola said even the other Dragon Generals were not allowed to use summoning or teleportation magic either. Conversely, Lady Dola herself had little knowledge of barrier or monster-related technologies. But she knew they existed.

If one could create monsters and teleport them to other worlds, you could create a kind of calculated harassment. Well, that would only happen if the Dragon Generals were ever to defy Lord Dragon God’s orders. Of course, none of the Five Dragon Generals would ever do such a thing.

"However, if it is possible, doesn't that mean teleportation and monsters were being caused by someone?"

"No... Research showed that the teleportation incidents and monster appearances occurring in the world were slightly different from those caused by magic."

"What do you mean?"

"When we use magic, we activate a phenomenon through a magic circle. But the teleportation and monsters appearing in the world show no such traces."

The research had progressed. Both teleportation and summoning had become possible. The true nature of the appearance of monsters and the vanishings caused by teleportation had also been understood.

"Then, what is their 'true nature'?"

"It's what we call Dragon Power."

Lady Dola explained: The Six Worlds are filled with a certain power. In the Dragon World, it was called "Dragon Power". In the Demon World, it was called "Magic Power",[18] now we call it Mana.

But this power exists in all beings that reside within the Six Worlds—people, beasts, fish, birds, and dragons alike. And this power was the cause behind the emergence of monsters and teleportation.

When a living being absorbs a massive amount of this power, it transforms into a monster. The bestowed power reconstructs the creature's body into something far more durable.

People are no exception. Though their outward appearance may not change much, they gain immense strength or special abilities beyond that of ordinary beings.

Perhaps even my Demon Eye and the overwhelming strength of the Five Dragon Generals could be considered a type of monsterization.

Additionally, this power naturally seeks balance across the Six Worlds.

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[18] The Kanji "Ma" (魔) is used for "Demon" and "Magic" (or even Witch). And it's the reason why old translations called the demons "the magic race" or "the magic continent." And so, the term "Maryoku" (魔力) could be used for "Demon Power" or "Magic Power" and it's the most common term used in MT and other series for "Mana".

If one world experiences a significant loss of power, it will draw in power from the others to compensate. And this absorption doesn’t just affect plants and animals—it includes people as well. This results in teleportation. The so-called "spirited away" phenomenon.

"However, this was as far as we managed to understand."

We had identified the cause. But we had yet to determine why these occurrences had increased so drastically after a certain period. The leading theory among researchers was that, at some point, the overall power of the worlds had decreased significantly, leading to imbalances.

When the worlds began to draw power from one to another to compensate, teleportation naturally occurred. And when areas of high and low power concentration formed within a world, monsters would appear more frequently in the denser regions.

That was the hypothesis. For now, it was the most plausible explanation. But why had the power of the worlds diminished so drastically in the first place? That remained unknown. Something must have caused it, otherwise it wouldn’t have happened.

"This understanding came only recently—just before the war started. The time to tell you had already passed, but the opportunity never arose."

And there was also the possibility that another world had caused it.

"Laplace. Do you understand why Lord Dragon God entrusted you with negotiations with the other worlds and allowed you to bring foreign engineers into the Dragon World?"

"No, I don’t."

"Lord Dragon God intended to share these findings with all Six Worlds once the research had progressed a little further. He planned to reveal the cause, countermeasures, and precautions to prevent it from happening again."

Hearing that, I was deeply moved by Lord Dragon God’s greatness. He wasn't just trying to protect the Dragon World.

He was trying to save all worlds.

"Lord Dragon God is merciful. And yet, those fools disgraced him. What hesitation could you possibly have?"

"...None."

Lord Dragon God had been betrayed by the other worlds.

Not only betrayed—misunderstood, accused without cause, and had his most beloved person stolen from him. Of course, he was furious.

This war was inevitable. It was only natural retribution. My doubts vanished. To be honest, I didn't fully understand half of the explanation about summoning at the time. But something inside me had cleared. In the next battle, I resolved to be the first to charge in.

As I left the research facility, I saluted Lady Dola as she flew off in satisfaction, then renewed my determination for the war against the Demons.

What a fool I was.

If only I had been a little wiser back then—if I had understood summoning and teleportation better—I would have asked Lady Dola this:

"If what you're saying is true, wouldn't destroying other worlds disrupt the balance of power even further, causing even more teleportation and monster outbreaks...?"

If I had asked that question, perhaps things wouldn't have ended the way they did. Lady Dola, who was always so wise, might have reconsidered, even if just slightly.

But I was too ignorant and stupid.

And so, the war against the Demon World began.

Chapter 19: The Fall of the Demon World

The war against the Demon World was fierce beyond measure. The power of the Eight Great Demon Kings and the Five Dragon Generals was evenly matched. The strength of Lord Dragon God and the Demon God was also equal. However, neither we nor Lord Dragon God were unscathed—we were far from being in peak condition. As a result, this time, the six of us alone were not enough to destroy a world. Ordinarily, there might have been a path toward peace... But Lord Dragon God chose to wage total war. He called upon every Dragonfolk in the Dragon World, mobilizing every single Dragon Warrior for battle.

Facing us were the Demon Warriors.

The Dragonfolk held the advantage in power, but the Demons had numbers on their side. It was an evenly matched battle. The Dragonfolk launched an offensive, invading the Demon World. We managed to deal significant damage to several cities, but the Demons, with their overwhelming numbers, proved tenacious. Unable to push through, the Dragonfolk were forced to retreat.

Then, the Demons counterattacked, invading the Dragon World.

Due to the unique geography of the Dragon World, the Demons could never completely overrun it, but we still suffered losses. This back-and-forth struggle lasted for years.

I, too, led Dragon Warriors into battle. I fought against the Eight Great Demon Kings numerous times. Strangely, however, Necross Lacross was nowhere to be seen. One of the Eight Great Demon Kings was always missing. Was he being held in reserve, or was he feeling too guilty to face me? I had no way of knowing.

The war dragged on for decades. The war also pushed forward technological advancement. Between battles, the Five Dragon Generals developed numerous new techniques and spells.

Lady Dola created spirits from summoning magic.

Kháos forged magic swords from the bones of monsters.

Szilard developed barriers to counter the Demons offensive magic.

Maxwell devised Dragon Gates to weaken the Demons power.

Revolutionary magic, the kind that could only arise from war, was created and used without mercy on the battlefield.

Of course, the Demons were no fools.

Well, a lot of them were fools, but there were some intelligent ones among them. To counter the Dragonfolk, they invented all sorts of spells.

Techniques that could obliterate dragons in a single flash, magic spears that amplified the wielder's power, and poisons that, once afflicted, would cause agony until death...[19]

Even now, there are many I still don't fully understand... I still wonder, what kind of techniques and formulas were used to create them? It was an all-out war and it was fought with the greatest technology and magic of its time. Although they were not recorded in history, most of it was lost.

It felt like a bottomless, endless struggle that would continue forever. But, as expected, even a war like that would eventually reach a turning point.

What do you think happened as technology advanced?

Numbers dwindled. On both sides.

Yes, in war, that's inevitable.

But both the Demons and the Dragonfolk are incredibly resilient races. At the start of the war, casualties were almost nonexistent. Even when armies of 100,000 clashed, only one or two people would die.

It's unbelievable, isn't it?

But as technology advanced, deaths rapidly increased. So much so that the Dragonfolk's gravestones were completely filled.

There are too many casualties! It's time to stop fighting!

In human wars, someone would have suggested that. But in the war between Dragonfolk and Demons, no one said such a thing.

The turning point was something else.

With our numbers dwindling, the Dragonfolk found themselves at a disadvantage. After all, the total war had begun because of the injuries suffered by Lord Dragon God and the Five Dragon Generals.

As the number of Dragon Warriors decreased, we began to lose ground.

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[19] I wonder if this was the base for Petrification Syndrome.

And that was when the Human God appeared.

As always, he stood behind me and said,

"It seems the Eight Great Demon Kings have been appearing on the front lines more often. If you take them down one by one, wouldn't you eventually win this war?"

"If we could do that, we wouldn’t be struggling."

"Just have all Five Dragon Generals fight together. Like when you battle monsters—overwhelm them with numbers."

The Five Dragon Generals were the strongest warriors of the Dragonfolk. We had always fought alone. But not out of pride. We simply never needed to fight together. Each of us could defeat all our enemies single-handedly.

It was a blind spot.

When I brought this idea to the others, they looked displeased. But deep down, everyone understood that if we wanted to win this war, we needed to do something different. So they agreed.

We provoked one the Eight Great Demon Kings, lured him out, isolated him—then the five of us struck together. No enemy could withstand the combined might of the Five Dragon Generals, the strongest among the Dragonfolk warriors. The Demon King died with his face frozen in shock and despair. And so, one by one, the Eight Demon Kings fell.

With their leaders gone, the Demons lost momentum and began to be exterminated by the Dragonfolk. But even until the very end, Necross Lacross never appeared...

Instead, the Demon God entered the battlefield.

When the Demon God saw us, he began to grow.

Five meters, ten meters.

One hundred meters, one thousand meters—he kept growing.

By the time his head reached the heavens and his feet looked like massive walls, the growth finally stopped.

Then, eyes appeared all over his body.

The eyes fixated on us, the Five Dragon Generals... and the Demon God began to move.

You might think that getting bigger would make him slower. After all, in human stories, giants are always sluggish and clumsy.

But the Demon God was different. He moved just as fast as before. His colossal punches and kicks, the size of mountains, rained down on us like meteors, striking with pinpoint precision. Even the Five Dragon Generals couldn't withstand it. Just having one of his fists pass near us sent us flying dozens of kilometers, smashing us into the ground.

The difference in power between a God and a General was overwhelming. We were completely outmatched. At that moment, I truly understood the sheer power of those called Gods. If I had faced the Beast God, the Sea God, or the Sky God, I would have been torn apart in an instant.

However, when the Demon God appeared, Lord Dragon God could not stand idly by. Having conserved his strength until then, Lord Dragon God finally revealed himself in the Demon World.

A one-on-one duel.

Even so, I felt uneasy.

Not even the great Lord Dragon God could possibly defeat a Demon God as massive as a mountain. Especially when he had yet to recover from his wounds inflicted by the Gods from the other worlds...

But that concern proved to be unfounded.

As golden light overflowed from Lord Dragon God's body, he began moving at a speed surpassing even light itself. The Demon God lashed out with fists and kicks, but they rarely landed. And on the rare occasion that they did, it was the Demon God's body that burst apart instead.

It was overwhelming.

Yet, even when parts of its body were blown away, the Demon God would instantly regenerate and strike back at Lord Dragon God, so it didn't seem like he was necessarily in the lead.

Each clash of these godly beings resounded with thunderous booms, sending tremors through our skin even from afar.

Then, delayed shockwaves followed, threatening to blow us away. Still, I kept my eyes fixed on Lord Dragon God's battle. I couldn't look away. This was the fourth time I had witnessed a battle between Gods. Each one had triggered cataclysmic disasters, shaking the world to its core as if it were on the brink of annihilation.

However, this battle was dragging on abnormally long.

Despite Lord Dragon God’s overwhelming destructive power, it was not enough to eradicate the Demon God. And in turn, the Demon God lacked a decisive move to end the fight. The fierce back-and-forth continued for ten days, then twenty.

No one could approach.

Like us, all anyone could do was watch from afar. It was a battle where either side could have won. But in the end, it was Lord Dragon God who emerged victorious. It was exactly on the hundredth day.

A divine radiance erupted from beneath the feet of the giant Demon God. For a brief moment, I couldn't comprehend what I was seeing. But as the particles of light ascended, I understood.

It was a magic circle.

A magic circle so colossal that it might have spanned an entire continent spread beneath the Demon God’s feet. I couldn't see the Demon God's expression from so far away. But judging from its movements, even he had not anticipated this. Who would have thought that Lord Dragon God would use magic...

The Demon God's body began to disintegrate from the feet up at an alarming rate. Its sheer size made it seem slow, but considering it was as large as a mountain, its collapse was anything but gradual. If this wasn’t rapid, what was?

And when the light finally subsided, Lord Dragon God returned.

In his hand, he held a small gemstone.

"Lord Dragon God!"

We rushed to his side. Lord Dragon God was gravely wounded. Not only had he yet to recover from the injuries inflicted by other Gods, but his battle with the Demon God had drained almost all of his Dragon Aura. Even the divine aura we normally felt from him was absent—he was utterly exhausted. He looked as though he might collapse at any moment, and every one of the Five Dragon Generals trembled in fear at the sight.

"This is bad! Lord Dragon God, this way! Let’s return to the Dragon World at once!"

"...Mmm..."

Lord Dragon God groaned weakly in response. We supported him and took to the skies. But then, Lady Dola suddenly turned back.

Her gaze fell upon the dazed Demons, staring blankly at the death of the Demon God. And beyond them, the world itself was beginning to crumble.

Yes, this battle between Lord Dragon God and the Demon God had been too much for the world to withstand.

Lady Dola took in the sight and tossed the gemstone to me.

"Laplace. You stay here and witness the end."

"...Understood!"

To witness the world's end... was it a matter of courtesy to another world? Both in the Sea World and in the Sky World we had left someone behind to witness their demise. Of course, it wasn't just a matter of etiquette. In those final moments before the world collapsed, I also had a task—to find the one who had killed Lady Lunaria.

In the Beast World, it had been the first time I witnessed such destruction, and I was too overwhelmed to do anything. I guess that can't be helped.

If you ever witness a world collapsing, you'll understand.

That sight... it's so shocking it paralyzes you.

A world, something that should be immovable no matter what, crumbling before your eyes. It's like watching the flow of a great and massive river, you can never stop it from flowing, you can only watch. And it can never go back to the way it was moments ago.

Even the mighty Demons were powerless before the collapse of their world. Just like the beings from other worlds, they scattered in confusion. But before long, they all began heading in the same direction.

To the ruins that led to another world. The Human God must have intervened again... It was a shocking sight, but after witnessing it multiple times, you grow numb to it.

With the collapsing world at my back, I flew across the Demon World. At that moment, I was searching for someone.

Necross Lacross.

One of the Eight Demon Kings, yet he never once showed himself in battle.

Was he hiding somewhere, or had he already perished?

He had strong ties to Kirishisu Karishisu. If I could find him and speak with him, perhaps I could obtain some valuable information.

Why hadn't I tried meeting him before this?

Because I had no way to.

After all, I had returned the Beast God's gemstone to Lord Dragon God immediately. I couldn't even propose the idea. Besides, I carried the guilt of having led the culprits into the Dragon World. Even if I had suggested it, Lord Dragon God would never have allowed me to enter the Demon World.

A combination of circumstances had led to this moment being my only chance to search for Necross Lacross.

"Hmm?"

After flying for some time, I spotted something.

The largest city in this world—Demon God City Daileck.

And its grandest castle—Demon God Castle Gaileck.

The castle was engulfed in flames.

A fortress that should have been impervious to fire was now burning, consumed by a black, unnatural blaze. Regardless of the chaos, setting fire to a God's dwelling... such an act went beyond abnormal behavior, even for a fleeing mob. I sensed that something was happening and approached the castle. However, thick smoke filled the air, obscuring the usual entrance. So, I descended to the ground. I usually arrived from the rooftop, so standing before the main gate felt somewhat fresh.

I saw several guards fleeing from the castle. When they caught sight of me, they screamed and scattered in panic. I moved forward, going against the flow of the fleeing soldiers and stepped inside the castle.

Inside, the heat was intense, and the charred remains of several Demons lay scattered. But it wasn't strong enough to penetrate my Dragon Aura. I walked through the burning castle, surveying the scene.

Naturally, there was no one left inside a castle about to collapse in flames. The once glorious Demon God Castle, Gaileck... what a desolate sight it had become. I didn't know who had set the castle ablaze, but whoever it was is probably no longer here. With that thought, I turned to leave the castle.

That’s when I encountered him.

He emerged from the staircase leading underground—a towering, six-armed black giant.

"Hmm!"

Necross Lacross.

The very person I had been searching for stood before me.

"You...!"

It had been a long time since I last saw his face, and he looked noticeably emaciated. Though an Immortal Demon shouldn’t be capable of losing weight. In his many arms, he cradled an infant.

"Laplace! I beg you, let me go...!"

Before I could say anything, Necross Lacross hid the infant behind him and pleaded.

"I understand why you betrayed us! But this child knows nothing! She is innocent!"

For a moment, I didn’t understand what he was saying.

Me? Betray?

"What are you talking about?"

"...What am I talking about? Laplace, wasn’t it you who killed Lady Kirishisu Karishisu and set the worlds against each other?"

"Wait, Kirishisu Karishisu was killed!? What do you mean!?"

"...Stop pretending! I know you plotted the whole thing!"

"I don’t know what you’re talking about! Tell me, Necross Lacross, when did Kirishisu Karishisu die?"

I calmed the agitated Necross Lacross and listened to his story.

Apparently, one day, Kirishisu Karishisu had returned to the Demon World. Necross Lacross didn’t know the exact details, but he said she had been ordered to stay in the Demon World for a while. The Demon God had simply nodded at his wife’s words, not questioning it further.

It was just around the time when Kirishisu Karishisu was nearing childbirth, so he assumed the Dragonfolk had sent her back, considering her condition.

Kirishisu Karishisu gave birth to a child.

The birth of the Immortal Demons is somewhat unique—they didn't develop swollen bellies or anything like that, but... well, that's irrelevant.

Shortly after giving birth, Kirishisu Karishisu was found dead. The Demon God flew into a rage and searched for the culprit. Fortunately, the culprit had left behind evidence.

Scales and silver hair.

Yes, the mark of the Dragonfolk.

And on the night of Kirishisu Karishisu's death, the Dragon Warriors who had been dispatched under my command disappeared without a trace.

It was a story you heard somewhere before, right?

And the conclusion was the same.

The Dragonfolk did it. That Laplace—one of the Five Dragon Generals—had taken revenge on the Demons.

But from there, the story took a slight turn.

When Necross Lacross heard this, he vehemently opposed the other enraged members of the Eight Great Demon Kings.

"Laplace is not the kind of man to do such a thing. Most likely, this was orchestrated by someone from another world to frame the Dragonfolk. We need to remain calm and investigate thoroughly."

The Demon Kings hesitated for the moment and decided to question the Dragonfolk before taking further action.

And then, right after that.

A report came that the Beast World had been annihilated by the Dragonfolk.

At the same time, a Dragon Warrior suspected of murdering Kirishisu Karishisu was captured. Under severe torture, the warrior confessed:

"Laplace ordered me to do it. Necross Lacross was his accomplice."

Necross Lacross was immediately arrested and imprisoned. He fell into deep despair. That was how much he had trusted me.

Yet, when he reflected on how he acted in the past, he thought:

"If Laplace sought revenge, it wouldn't be unjustified."

After that, Necross Lacross had no knowledge of the state of the Demon World... But the conclusion remained the same. The Demons chose war and faced off against the Dragonfolk.

Necross Lacross awaited his inevitable fate in the dark underground prison. However, even he realized something must have happened when the Demon God perished and the world began to collapse.

Necross Lacross managed to break free from his cell and escape. From the fleeing people, he learned what had happened and hesitated on what to do next. That's when he saw the castle engulfed in flames.

Black flames.

Seeing that strange fire, he remembered the newborn child of the Demon God. Fearing the worst, he rushed inside the castle and found the infant's room. Sure enough, the child had been left behind. He took the baby and fled the castle—only to run into me.

"....."

"I was sure you were the one behind everything, but judging by your face... it seems I was wrong."

"A-Ah, yeah..."

My mind went blank from the overwhelming revelations. If this was true, then we had fallen into a trap and been framed by someone.

But who?

And for what purpose?

At the very least, I knew Necross Lacross wasn't lying. He wasn't the kind of man who could tell a lie. In the first place, he wasn't intelligent enough to think of one.

"I'd like to talk in detail, but right now, my priority is ensuring this child survives. If you really hold no hostility toward me... then please, step aside."

"....."

I slowly moved out of the way, letting him pass.

The child of the Demon God.

Anyone could see that once she grew up, she would surely become an enemy of Lord Dragon God. Yet, I couldn’t bring myself to stop them. After hearing Necross Lacross’ story, how could I possibly kill an innocent child? If, after mistakenly destroying their world, I killed a child out of fear of revenge, I would be nothing more than a villain.

"Head to the Teleportation Shrine. The path to the Human World is still open."

"Hmph! I owe you one...!"

Necross Lacross left. Cradling the newborn infant, whose eyes had yet to open. And I, too, returned to the Dragon World. Holding the information I had obtained from Necross Lacross close to my heart.

And thus, the Demon World collapsed.

Chapter 20: Defection

When I returned, Lord Dragon God was lying on the floor.

His condition was terrible.

Blood flowed from his shoulders, one of his eyes was shut, and one of his legs was crippled. On top of that, he had sustained a severe wound on his arm from his battle with the Demon God. He was battered and broken. That was the only way to describe him.

Wounds inflicted by one God upon another do not heal quickly. It would take an incredibly long time—perhaps even hundreds of thousands of years—for him to slowly recover.

"Laplace, you have done well."

Yet, Lord Dragon God had a calm expression.

Despite his many wounds, he seemed relieved that his vengeance had been carried out. No matter where the culprit had been, no matter if he was still alive, the fact that their world had been destroyed was enough for him.

"The Demon World has been destroyed without issue."

"I see... Then you should rest as well. You must be exhausted."

However, beneath his calm demeanor, there was a hint of unease and regret. He must have realized that he had gone too far. And this was not what Lady Lunaria would have wanted.

If things had remained peaceful for tens of thousands of years, Lord Dragon God's mind would have cooled, and maybe he would have been able to find another path to solve this incident.

"No, before that, I have something to discuss."

"Hmm... What is it?"

But that chance was lost forever.

Because I told Lord Dragon God what I had learned from Necross Lacross.

"I found Necross Lacross in the collapsing Demon World. According to him, Kirishisu Karishisu——"

Lord Dragon God listened to my words with a blank expression. As if to say, "And what of it?" But as the story progressed, his expression changed. First, it turned grim. Then suspicious. Then thoughtful. By the time I finished, he was deep in contemplation, his face twisted in a troubled frown.

"That is all."

"....."

"...Um, Lord Dragon God?"

He remained silent, lost in thought, not responding to my voice. But my report was complete. For now, I would follow orders, withdraw, and rest. Just when I thought that—

"...So, it was him."

Lord Dragon God muttered and slowly rose to his feet. He stepped out of bed and began to leave the room.

"W-Where are you going!?"

Startled, I asked that, and he answered—

"I will invade the Human World."

I thought it was absurd.

I wondered why.

The Humans were supposed to be the victims in all of this.

They were the ones who cleaned up the aftermath of our rampage. We should be grateful to them. Could it be that the true mastermind behind everything was the Humans? Did they pit the Dragonfolk against the other races? But why? There was no reason.

If Lady Lunaria had lived, the Humans would have stood alongside the Dragonfolk at the top of all species. Besides, the Human God had accepted those from the destroyed worlds.

Perhaps that had somehow benefited the Humans. But if that were the case... they could have simply assisted me in my role as a diplomat. In time, the various worlds would have been filled with a diverse array of species. There would have been no need for destruction.

If the Humans were truly the ones pulling the strings, their actions made no sense. That was why I was confused.

I could not understand Lord Dragon God's actions or his reasoning.

...Looking back now, the wise Lord Dragon God must have realized everything the moment he heard my words. With just a tiny fragment of information, he got a slight clue. That alone was enough for him to grasp who the real enemy was, who truly needed to be defeated. Of course, it was only possible because he had knowledge that I did not.

But at the time, I understood nothing. You may call me foolish and laugh if you wish. However, I simply could not believe that the Humans had been manipulating events behind the scenes.

Now, I wonder how I failed to see it...

But back then, I simply didn't understand. I lacked enough wisdom. No—he was simply several moves ahead of me.

"Summon the Five Dragon Generals. The battle is not over yet..."

And Lord Dragon God did not explain himself. Until now, we had always followed his commands without question. If Lord Dragon God said to turn right, we turned right. Thus, he must have believed that no explanation was necessary. Of course, he was not wrong. That was how we had always been.

But just that once, I wanted an explanation. I needed one.

Just that one time...

"That is all. Begin preparations at once."

Once the Five Dragon Generals had gathered, Lord Dragon God immediately issued the command to attack the Human World.

Just the command. No explanation.

Then, dragging his wounded body, he left the meeting room without another word. He seemed to be in a hurry. But we had no time to question it. Because the order we had just received was far too shocking.

"This... This is ridiculous..."

"This war was meant to avenge Lady Lunaria. The Human World is her homeland. What purpose does attacking it serve?"

"I do not know. But Lord Dragon God must have his reasons. He must..."

The Five Dragon Generals were all stunned. Naturally. They had believed the war was already over. Now was the time to heal the wounded, to rebuild the cities that had been destroyed, to mourn the dead, and to start again, looking to the future. And yet, we were being told to fight once more. And on top of that, we were to fight against those who had been our allies until now. Against those with whom we had no reason to fight.

"What, then, do you propose we do?"

"The Human World has always been our ally."

"Is there truly a reason to invade and destroy them...?"

A meeting without Lord Dragon God was an unusual occurrence. Normally, when Lord Dragon God issued an order, we Five Dragon Generals would simply act upon it. And yet, on that particular day, we kept on talking. There were many reasons for it.

The Human World was Lady Lunaria's homeland. The Human God had always been an ally of the Dragonfolk and had helped us many times in the past. It's easier to understand if I use myself as an example, but in fact, the other Dragon Generals had also been helped by the Human God on multiple occasions. Destroying the Human World would be easier compared to our previous battles. But our previous battles had all been fought as a means of avenging Lady Lunaria.

All of these factors put a brake on our actions. The debate grew heated and reached an impasse. It was because we had no idea what Lord Dragon God was thinking.

"Laplace. Just what did you tell Lord Dragon God?"

After a while, Szilard asked me this. And so, I answered honestly. I told him what I had heard in the Demon World. I told him what had likely transpired there. After listening, Szilard nodded as if he had come to an understanding and said:

"I see. You must have been deceived."

"Deceived? Me?"

"Yes. Necross Lacross must have lied—to escape from you, to let the Demon God's daughter escape, and to pit us Dragonfolk against the Humans."

I hadn't thought Necross Lacross was capable of lying. But if his words were false, then everything made sense.

Foolish as I was, when Szilard said that to me, I considered that even someone like Necross Lacross, in such an extreme situation, could have forced himself to think quickly and come up with a lie.

Even though I had believed he was not the kind of man who could lie. Well, even if he always spoke of peace between worlds, if his beloved world was on the verge of destruction, then of course he would resort to such measures. It was only natural for him to try to make the Dragonfolk and Humans fight each other.

Perhaps the reason he never appeared on the battlefield was because he was working in the shadows. Maybe his usual foolish demeanor was all an act, meant to lead up to his final betrayal. When people are confused, they rely more on external information than their own certainty.

Necross Lacross cannot lie.

That fact was powerless in the face of the possibility that "he might have lied." Because there was no definitive proof.

"Perhaps... that is true..."

And yet, something...

Something about it still nagged at me.

"Under normal circumstances, Lord Dragon God would not have been deceived... but because it was your report, he believed it without question."

And when it was put like that, I had nothing to say in return. The reason Lord Dragon God had believed my report so readily was that he trusted me. If I had given him false information, then that was my responsibility.

"We are the Five Dragon Generals, the hands and feet of Lord Dragon God. Normally, we do not question his orders and simply obey... However—" The next words forced upon us a decision unlike any we had ever faced before. "Just this once... should we stop him?"

Everyone held their breath.

Even if it was my faulty information that led to this, the order had already been given. An order given by Lord Dragon God meant that he had made his decision. Stopping it would mean opposing Lord Dragon God himself.

Giving opinions before a decision was made was one thing, but this was different.

Denying a God.

Rejecting the very thing we believed in at our core.

It required immense courage.

Have you ever opposed a great will before? That was my first time.

"...Very well."

The first to agree was Kháos.

He had mourned our fallen comrades more than anyone. Though he was the biggest warmonger among us, he rejoiced the most at the end of battle. If a battle was necessary, he would not have objected. In fact, he would have been the first to call for war. But if it was an unnecessary battle...

"Indeed. The Humans may be the weakest, but the Human God is still a God. And Lord Dragon God is already gravely injured. We should be concerned for his well-being..."

Maxwell also agreed.

He was concerned for Lord Dragon God's health. If we fought any further, Lord Dragon God might die. I did not believe Lord Dragon God would lose. But if he suffered an irreparable injury, it could still cost him his life.

"....."

Lady Dola hesitated.

For her, the most loyal among us, disobeying Lord Dragon God's orders was incredibly difficult.

"...If it is for Lord Dragon God's sake, then so be it."

But in the end, she agreed.

Her loyalty was stronger than anyone's. If this course of action would be harmful to Lord Dragon God, then she would go against her own convictions to stop it. That was the depth of her resolve.

And so, we rushed to Lord Dragon God.

First, we tried to persuade him with words. We told him that the Humans had always been our allies. That this was surely just a desperate lie concocted by the Demons. That we were worried for his well-being.

We pleaded for him to abandon the war.

But it was no use.

Lord Dragon God would not listen. No matter how much we asked why, his reasoning was incomprehensible to us.

"The Human God is no longer the Human God I knew. I do not know what his goal is, but he must be killed."

At the time, we couldn’t understand what he meant.

The Human God had not changed from the moment I first saw him. If anything—it was Lord Dragon God who had changed. The Lord Dragon God we knew, who was full of compassion and had a deep respect for peace, had now become a being consumed by war.

"We do not wish to fight against the Humans. Please, Lord Dragon God, we beg you, would you lay down your arms?"

And so, we sought to abandon the battle.

We would not fight.

And so, neither would Lord Dragon God.

"I don't mind. You may stay behind. I will go alone."

But Lord Dragon God would not listen. He declared firmly that he would go, even alone, and prepared to set off for the Human World.

"Please, wait! we beg you, reconsider!"

"I cannot."

"Why? The Human God has always been our ally. Lord Dragon God, you yourself have said it before! That our current prosperity is thanks to the efforts of the Humans!"

"This battle—its root cause lies with the Human God."

"What proof do you have of that?"

"It lies in the Human World."

Do you know the phrase "an argument going in circles"?

That's exactly what it was.

We tried every possible means of persuasion. We did not wish to fight Lord Dragon God either. But the conclusion remained the same. Lord Dragon God refused to listen and insisted on invading the Human World.

At the very least, if he could have explained why he had to invade the Human World. Why he had to kill the Human God. If only he had explained with more detail about his reasoning, if he had shared his thoughts with more care... That is what I cannot help but think now.

But even now, I believe that it couldn’t be helped.

We, the Five Dragon Generals, had followed Lord Dragon God's words for too long. No matter how capable Lord Dragon God was, it was difficult to give an answer to those who had obeyed him unquestioningly for over hundreds of thousands of years. And now, suddenly, the same people came with an objection. Something as simple as explaining oneself—something that should have been common sense—was beyond him.

Tell me, if the broom you use every day suddenly said: "I don't want to clean anymore," what would you do? Would you explain to the broom the importance of cleaning and its role in the process?

Or would you simply force it to clean? Or perhaps, you'd use another tool or make a new one to do the cleaning?

In the end, I believe it was the same with us. One could say that Lord Dragon God had grown too reliant on our loyalty...

But I do not wish to put it that way. Lord Dragon God trusted us, the Five Dragon Generals. He believed that we would never turn our fangs against him. And that if he remained firm in his stance that, in the end, we would begrudgingly follow.

But we betrayed that trust.

" Lord Dragon God... if you will not listen, then we have no choice but to stop you, even if we have to do it by force."

Even now, my heart aches when I recall the expression on Lord Dragon God's face when Szilard said those words.

I had never seen him so deeply shocked and wounded before.

For the first time, I wondered if we were making an irreversible mistake. But even if we lost Lord Dragon God's trust—so be it.

We were prepared for that. Even if we lost our status as the Five Dragon Generals and were exiled from the Dragon World. As long as Lord Dragon God lived, that was all that mattered. That was what we believed.

"...Try, if you dare."

Yet even then, Lord Dragon God did not change his mind.

The matter was too great to turn back from. Only we remained ignorant of that. If only, just for a moment—

Even if he was clumsy with words, even if it took time—

If only he had explained more clearly why he had to invade the Human World, why the Human God had to die. And if even one among us had possessed the wisdom to understand.

I cannot help but think that way.

No, perhaps even if he had done so, this war would have been unavoidable.

For I now know the truth.

That enemy had planned everything meticulously, guiding events over countless years to lead to this moment.

And yet, I still cannot help but think—If just one thing had been different, perhaps that tragic conclusion could have been avoided.

A foolish thought.

And so, this is how the battle began.

The most tragic, the most foolish, the most meaningless final battle I have ever seen in my long life...

Chapter 21: The Betrayal of the Five Dragon Generals

The betrayal of the Five Dragon Generals.

That is how history has recorded the battle now. Well, it's not entirely incorrect. Even if we did it for the sake of Lord Dragon God, in the end, it was still a betrayal. An undeniable betrayal.

However, there is one major inaccuracy.

In reality, only four of the Five Dragon Generals participated in that battle.

Because I did not fight.

After the battle, someone had to clean up the aftermath. It would be a battle between Lord Dragon God and the Five Dragon Generals. Some of the generals—perhaps all—might die. If that happened, the Dragon World would be left short-handed.

Who would oversee the Dragon Warriors? Who would hunt the monsters? Who would continue the research on magic? And who would assist Lord Dragon God...? That role fell to me. It was a crucial role, yet a shameful one.

Why was it shameful, you ask?

Listen carefully.

The Five Dragon Generals defied Lord Dragon God’s orders. Not only that, but we raised our claws and fangs against him, trying to keep him there by force. Even if Lord Dragon God reconsidered and abandoned his invasion of the Human World, the fact that we had rebelled would not change.

Even if no one died, punishment would be unavoidable. Depending on the circumstances, we might even have to atone with our lives. And yet, I alone was given a role that allowed me to escape that fate.

Still, even if I did not fight, the fact remained that I had defied Lord Dragon God's orders and attempted to stop him. And yet, I would continue to sit among the Dragon Generals as if nothing had happened.

There is nothing more shameless than that.

Even with the pretext that it was for the sake of the Dragon World's future. But I was only a low-ranking member. So, I accepted my role.

Now, when I say it was a battle, it didn't start immediately.

Lord Dragon God versus the Dragon Generals.

If they fought, one or two mountains would be obliterated with ease. Even if they were to fight, preparations had to be made beforehand.

Stopping Lord Dragon God.

It's very easy to say that. Strike him, kick him, weaken him, bind him, and lock him away somewhere. You might imagine something like that.

But to exert enough force to stop Lord Dragon God's movements meant mountains would be wiped off the map. And there was, of course, no place that could contain him—we would need an extraordinary spell. It was like a child challenging an adult. You may not have much experience with children, but no matter how sick or injured an adult might be, a toddler could never overpower him. That was the gap between Lord Dragon God and the Dragon Generals.

That was why the four of them had to combine their strength and go all out against him. Just like when we took down the Demon Kings. No, it would take even more than that. It took some time to prepare. Lord Dragon God even agreed to wait a little longer. It may sound absurd, but each of the Dragon Generals had responsibilities to hand over, and the Dragonfolk needed to be evacuated. For whatever reason, He allowed it.

Perhaps Lord Dragon God anticipated that even if he went to the Human World alone, victory would be uncertain. Or perhaps he thought that, given time, the Dragon Generals would come to their senses. I do not know.

While the generals were preparing, I remained by Lord Dragon God's side, overseeing the evacuation of Dragonfolk from the city of Chaos to other settlements. No one knew where the battle would take place, but Chaos was at the world's center. There was a high chance it would be caught in the crossfire. I spent several days leading the evacuation.

The people were bewildered. Even after hearing that four of the Five Dragon Generals had turned against Lord Dragon God, they couldn't believe it. Some even rose to fight by his side. But Lord Dragon God gently held them back. For if he fought the Dragon Generals, even the strongest among the Dragonfolk would be wiped out in an instant. He saw no reason for unnecessary deaths.

After the evacuation, I remained by Lord Dragon God's side. Not only to show that I was still his loyal aide but also to prevent him from growing impatient and departing for the Human World. Lord Dragon God remained silent. He did not speak to me, nor did he push me away.

He simply sat, lost in thought.

Had he wanted, he could have ignored my feeble attempts to restrain him and left for the Human World at any time. What was He thinking? I can only imagine. But Lord Dragon God was wise. By then, he had already figured out the identity of the mastermind. Perhaps he was contemplating his motives. Or perhaps, even then, he had already foreseen the worst possible outcome that was to come.

At any rate, those days came to an end. The Dragon Generals sent word that they were ready. Upon receiving this news, Lord Dragon God looked at me.

"What will you do?"

"I will fight by your side, my Lord."

I had a sense of duty.

To uphold the will of the Dragon Generals. To ensure Lord Dragon God would not be alone. To fulfill my duty as the last remaining general...

"....."

Lord Dragon God gazed at me for a long moment, then slowly shook his head.

"I will not allow you to fight."

"!"

For a moment, I thought that because I had once opposed him, He would no longer allow me to stand by his side.

"Instead, you will serve as my child's protector, just in case."

But he entrusted me with a task of utmost importance.

The protection of the Young Master.

Until then, that duty had been left to the Elite Dragon Warriors. But he must have felt they were not enough. Looking back, he must have feared that while he was fighting, the Young Master would become a target.

"Do not let even a scratch befall him."

"Yes sir!"

At the time, I didn’t think the Young Master held such an important role.

I only saw it as being entrusted with the most precious thing to Lord Dragon God, as a memento of Lady Lunaria. I simply believed I had to protect him no matter what... that was the extent of my understanding.

And then, I mounted Saleyakt and carried the Young Master far away to safety, and after a short while...

Chaos was eradicated.

Chaos was destroyed by a long-range bombardment from the Cannon Dragon Gates, created by Maxwell.

Multiple beams of light traveled across the sky, striking Chaos. The moment they landed, the beams of light became orbs of light, literally destroying the entire mountain.

The tallest mountain in the Dragon World.

The most historic city in the Dragon World.

I was stunned.

I hadn't been told what kind of battle the Dragon Generals were planning to wage. Never in my wildest dreams did I think they would so easily obliterate that Chaos—That city which was so rich in history, which had been protected for a million years. For a moment, I even wondered if the Dragon Generals had truly betrayed Lord Dragon God.

But thinking about it rationally, the answer was clear. It goes without saying—the Dragon Generals' goal was not to slay Lord Dragon God.

Their objective was to make him reconsider. To keep him in the Dragon World, rather than allowing him to go to the Human World. By destroying Chaos, reconstruction would take time. No one could predict how much effort would be required for the residents to return to their original lives. If Lord Dragon God thought, "I must prioritize the Dragon World over the Human World", then regardless of how this battle ended, the Dragon Generals would have won. Perhaps it was a shallow plan...

But the Dragon Generals had also considered the possibility of their defeat. Because if they lost and Lord Dragon God went to the Human World alone, it would all be meaningless.

Now then, Chaos had been annihilated, and as the dust cleared—

One figure remained.

Lord Dragon God.

He was completely unscathed.

He was too far away to discern his expression, but I could tell he was looking in the direction from which the light had come. At the end of his gaze—Dark clouds loomed below at an angle.

From the gaps in those clouds, something huge emerged.

A massive floating landmass, covered in dragon scales.

From its surface, numerous iron stakes, crackling with violet lightning protruded from it.

It was one of the many floating landmasses that existed in the Sky World.

To that landmass, which had a particularly high concentration of Magic Power, a core had been embedded deep within it, and then, it was covered with multiple layers of magic circles, one on top of each other. Dragon scales were used to cover its surface, and on top of that, magic artillery turrets once used by the Demons were installed in it—thus transforming it into a perfect flying fortress.

Its name?

It had none.

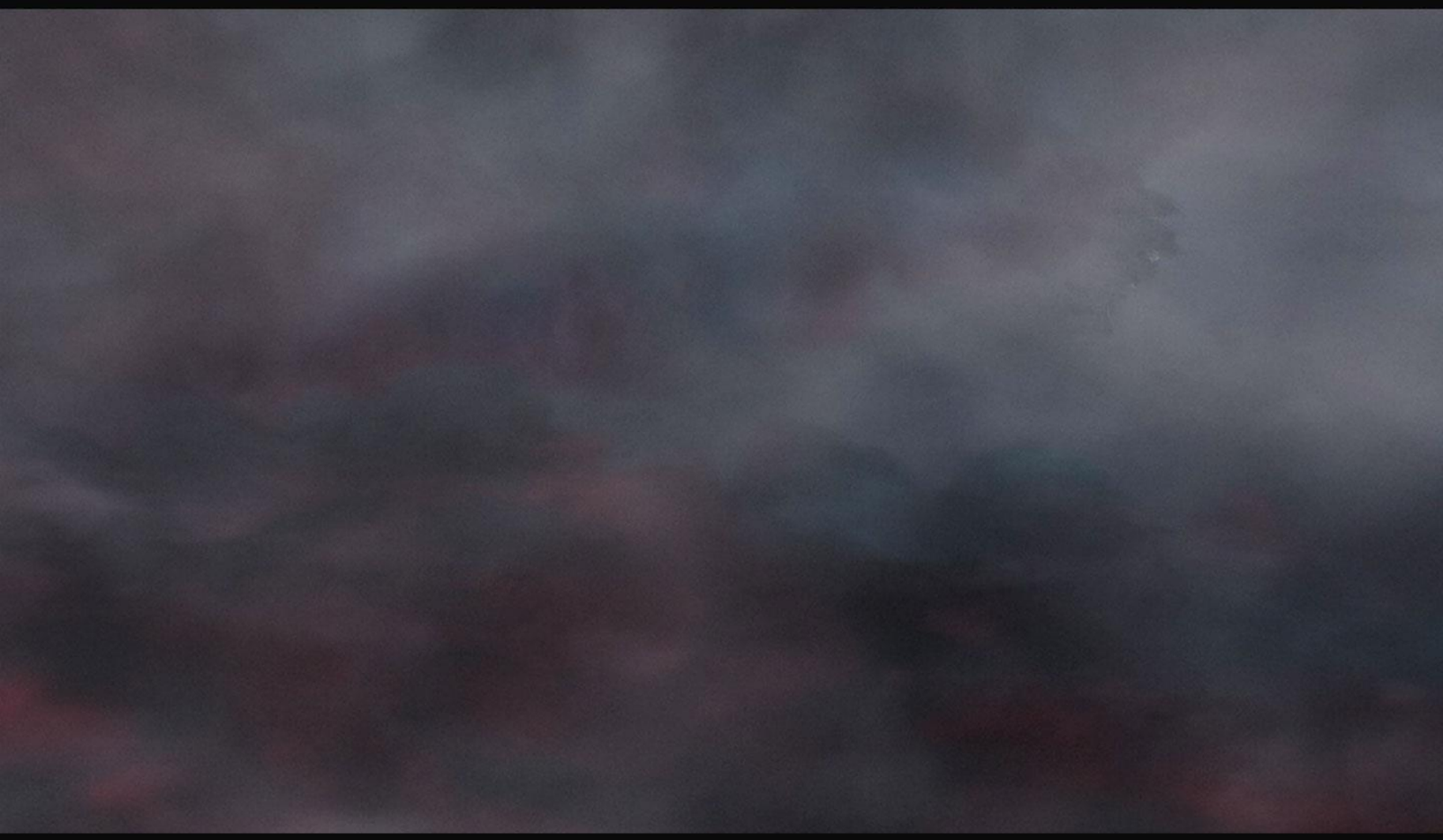
Ah... But if I were to give it one...

Chaos Breaker.[20]

That's what I would call it.

Because the sight of the moment when Chaos was destroyed was forever seared into my memory, I can still see it when I close my eyes...

[20] As I mentioned in the first chapters, the name of the city was "Keioos" (ケイオース), not "Kayos". And the name of the Floating Fortress is "Keioos Bureikaa" (ケイオースブレイカー). This is why it was important to name the city "Chaos" and not give that name to the Dragon General Kháos.



Now then.

Aboard that fortress were four great beings and forty-four smaller ones. Four of the Five Dragon Generals, and the spirits they had summoned. This spirit summoning technique had been developed during the war against the Demons. The Dragonfolk possessed great strength, but they lacked finesse in magic. Their versatility was limited.

Spirit summoning was a technique created to overcome that weakness. The summoned beings, crafted to oppose Lord Dragon God, were even stronger and possessed more abilities than those used during the war. As soon as they recognized Lord Dragon God's presence, they took flight, spreading out around the fortress.

However, before they could fully deploy, Lord Dragon God moved. He slowly raised his arm, pointing a single finger at the fortress. In that instant, something invisible shot forth from his fingertip, hurtling toward the fortress. An overwhelming surge of power. Even the Dragon Generals would not survive if caught in it.

But before it could reach them, the fortress shape began to distort. A massive distortion field had been generated. The surge of power twisted upon contact, veering off course—obliterating a distant mountain instead. The forty-four spirits had combined their strength to block Lord Dragon God's attack. Then, Lord Dragon God unleashed a relentless barrage of power, one after another.

Yet the spirits' distortion field deflected every single one.

Do you think they were effortlessly deflecting his attacks?

I thought so too.

Even though Lord Dragon God had lost much of his strength in battle against the Gods, I still couldn’t believe it. Could just forty-four spirits truly withstand his attacks? But that wasn’t the case. As the fortress approached Lord Dragon God, the spirits’ radiance began to fade.

And then—just one step closer.

No, “step” isn’t quite the right word...

Regardless, just as the fortress was about to reach Lord Dragon God, the spirits lost their strength, vanishing one after another.

The distortion field disappeared, leaving the fortress exposed. Even so, it was still covered in tough dragon scales.

At that moment, Lord Dragon God reached for the sword at his waist.

It was the God Sword, forged by one of the Five Dragon Generals—the Mad Dragon King Kháos. It was a genuinely divine blade. A sword powerful enough to withstand Lord Dragon God's power.

He slowly brought it to his side—and swung away.

I thought I had seen clearly the power of a God before.

But that was only when Gods clashed with other Gods. When the opponent had equal strength, it could appear ordinary in comparison.

This strike, however, seemed to warp the very world itself.

Everything felt misaligned.

And in truth, it was.

The sky, the clouds, even the distant dragons flying overhead— and the fortress looming before him—All of it went out of alignment—And fell.

Everything had been cleaved in two.

What meaning did dragon scales hold against the power of a God?

What value did the pitiful defensive spells of mere mortals have?

The massive fortress split in half, its upper section tilted and fell toward the sky below. Only the lower half remained—perhaps because the core had been placed deeper within the structure.

The Dragon Generals stood atop the floating rock. As the rock began to split and fall, they swiftly took flight.

Their appearances had changed drastically from what I remembered. Their bodies were now three times larger than before. The thick scales covered even their faces. Their nose and mouth protruded, and horns grew from the back of their head, transforming them into something resembling a dragon.

It was a secret technique developed by the Demons, capable of altering the body through the use of Magic Power. The Dragonfolk had taken this technique and evolved it further. Adapting it for the use of Dragonfolk.

By transforming their bodies into a more primal state, they gained explosive power. In exchange, their lifespan was drastically shortened.

The four individuals with such bodies also wielded unfamiliar weapons.

Spears.

The Dragon Generals were armed with God Spears crafted by Kháos.

Normally, the Dragon Generals did not rely on weapons. But this time was different—their opponent was Lord Dragon God. Without weapons, they wouldn't even be able to leave a scratch.

The four figures soared through the air at incredible speed, launching themselves at Lord Dragon God. Their intent had likely been close-quarters combat from the beginning. The fortress, the spirits—those were nothing more than measures to shield themselves from Lord Dragon God's long-range attacks and to close the distance.

By enhancing their physical abilities with the secret technique, increasing their offensive power with spears, and using every technique devised during the war against the Demons, they aimed to chip away at Lord Dragon God's strength.

The culmination of the Dragon Generals' wisdom and relentless refinement had granted them the ability to wound the body of a God.

Their ferocious assault was overwhelming.

With every movement, shockwaves rippled through the air, flashes of light burst forth, and the entire Dragon World trembled. Even the slightest overflow of power could shatter mountains, eradicate swarms of dragons, and drag thousands—tens of thousands—of Dragonfolk into destruction.

The Dragon Generals had attained the power to wound the body of a God.

However, that was all—it only meant they were "capable" of inflicting damage. Even with that power, they were still far from overwhelming Lord Dragon God. They barely managed to hold their own due to their numbers—four against one. Had it been a one-on-one battle, they would have been annihilated in an instant.

But barely.

Just barely—

Even if they were clearly at a disadvantage, the strength of the Dragon Generals had "reached" Lord Dragon God.

They had reached a God.

Even if it was just the tip of his finger—they had undeniably reached him.

They had proven that mortal determination could reach the level of Gods. And that proof—what it means to me... no, that can wait for now.

At any rate, the battle between the Dragon Generals and Lord Dragon God raged on. Lord Dragon God, who was gravely injured and on the brink of death. The Dragon Generals, who, after meticulous preparation, had finally managed to lay a hand on a God.

The five of them fought on, nearly as equals.

I watched the entire time.

Because I believed it was my duty to bear witness.

How many days did the battle last?

Well, not many.

When Gods clash, it's not uncommon for battles to span years, but this time, it didn't last that long. Even so, it was a few days.

Yes—six days, to be exact.

The Dragon Generals had aimed for a swift, decisive battle.

Of course they did.

No matter how thoroughly they had prepared, the difference in the power they could wield was immense. If the fight dragged on, their chances of victory would shrink to nothing. Thus, they staked everything on a short-term battle. With their maximum offensive power, they aimed for that one in ten thousand chance of victory.

But one in ten thousand is still just that—one in ten thousand. A single possibility in life out of ten thousand attempts. And unfortunately, this time was not that one-in-ten-thousand moment.

On the seventh day.

The light of battle faded. The shockwaves ceased. The fight had been decided above the flying fortress which had been cut in half. I moved closer to witness the outcome.

And what I saw was astonishing.

Four figures lay collapsed.

Needless to say, it was the Dragon Generals.

Every one of them was in a near-death state.

Szilard had lost his left arm, and half of his face had been burned away.

Kháos had lost an eye, and had a massive hole gouged into his abdomen.

Maxwell had every claw shattered, his wings torn off, and was kneeling in defeat.

But Lady Dola had suffered the worst.

Her right arm and lower body were gone—she was at death's door.

Lord Dragon God had won.

However, there was something strange.

From Lord Dragon God's chest, an arm protruded.

Was it Szilard's lost arm? Or Lady Dola's?

No, it wasn't that.

This arm had no scales.

Its skin was pale and featureless. A limb so nondescript that it refused to leave an impression, as if shrouded in mist.

Everyone, even Lord Dragon God, stared at it in stunned silence.

No—at the one to whom that arm belonged. A single God, standing behind Lord Dragon God, having landed a fatal strike.

"Human God..."

The Human God had thrust his hand into Lord Dragon God's chest—grasping his God Gem in his hand.

Chapter 22: The End of the Dragon World

Why? I wondered.

I thought it was absurd.

Because until this very moment, we had believed that the Human God was our ally. No—perhaps I should say even then, even at this stage.

"Human God... why?"

I muttered those words.

I think my mind was in a turmoil of emotions. Certainly, Lord Dragon God had intended to invade the Human World. From the perspective of the Human God, he may have been an enemy.

And yet, and yet—

He had always been our ally. He had given us advice, lent us his aid. He had helped us avenge Lady Lunaria. The Human God—until now—had always acted with all the worlds in mind.

Then, the Human God turned his gaze toward me.

With that nasty, detestable, mocking grin on his face.

"Ahh... haha, well, you see... hehe."

I'm sure, at first, he intended to say something plausible.

Something that would sound reasonable, respectable—something befitting the God of the Human World. But he couldn't hold it in. That situation must have been far too amusing for him.

Everything had gone too perfectly—he couldn't help but mock us.

"He, hehehe... HAHAHAHAHAHAHA..."

He exploded in laughter.

A laugh that clung to my ears and wouldn't fade.

"Oh, no, no... everyone, you really did a great job. Thanks to you all, I was able to accomplish my goal..."

The Human God spoke to us, who stood there in stunned silence.

That was the first time I heard him like that—and I haven't heard from him since... But judging from the words and actions of all those who were deceived and led to ruin afterward, I understand it well now. Whenever he finds himself in a situation like this, he likes to run his mouth endlessly.

Then, as he pats you on the shoulder, he always says “Well done”.

"Thank you."

"W-What... are you talking about...?"

Like an idiot, I asked that question.

If I had thought about it even for a moment, I would have realized that Lord Dragon God’s words were true.

"What am I talking about? Isn’t it obvious? I set the gods against each other and destroyed the worlds."

Yes—he was the mastermind.

Everything, everything was his doing.

The growing animosity between the Gods, the murders of Lady Lunaria and the important people of each world.

All of it was orchestrated by him.

Perhaps even the appearance of monsters and the phenomenon of teleportation—perhaps those, too, were his work.

No... that might have just been a coincidence.

But there was no doubt that he had used them to his advantage.

"I mean, I’d been planting the seeds little by little for ages, but the Dragon God was annoyingly cautious. Still, I never imagined things would go this smoothly."

"....."

"Especially you, Szilard. You really outdid yourself. You never once doubted me—you acted exactly as I wanted."

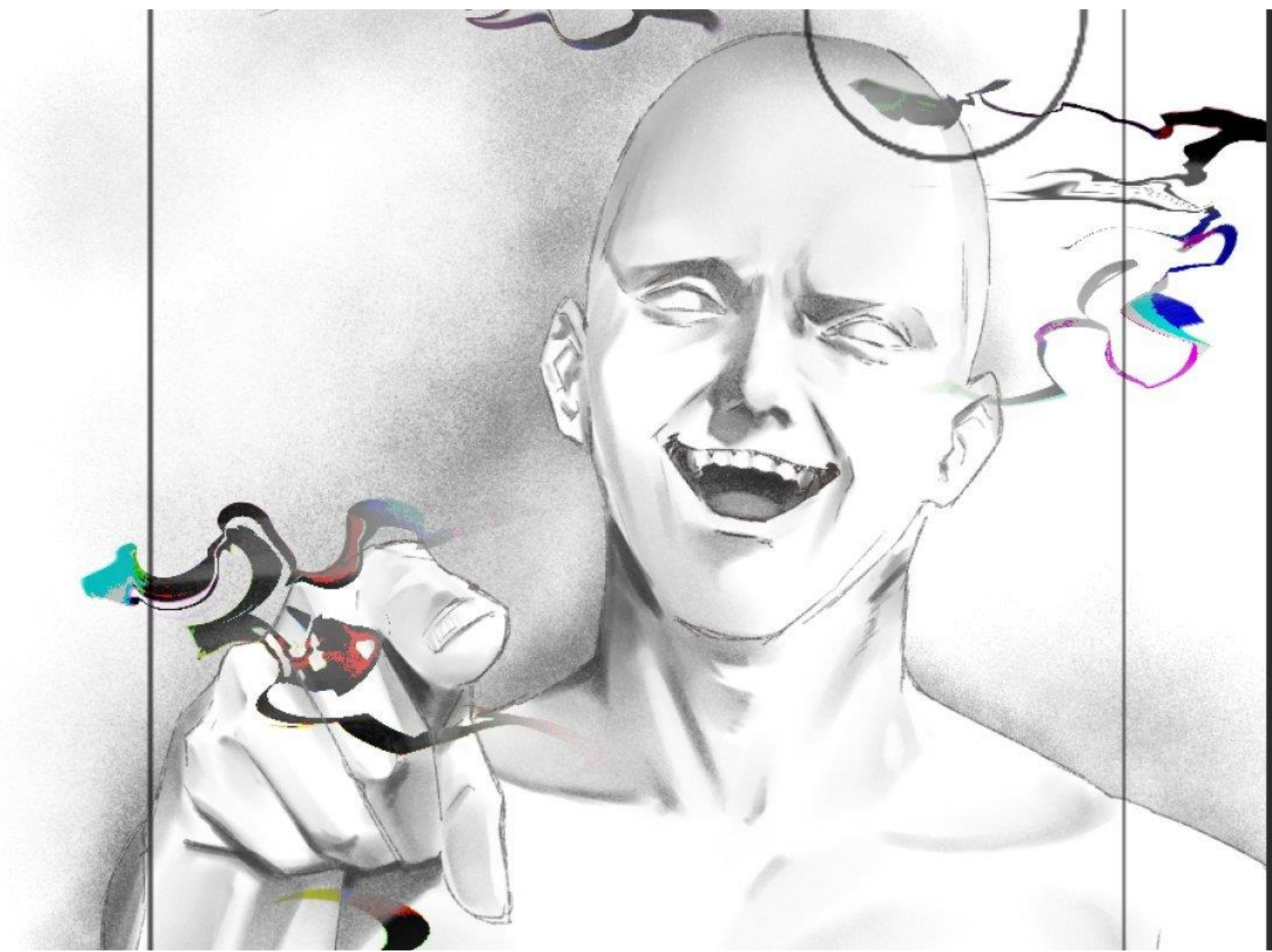
Szilard’s eyes widened, his body trembling violently.

"If not for your efforts, the Dragon World and the other worlds wouldn't have been driven to destroy each other. I just needed to say four magic words, 'for Lord Dragon God', and you quickly and conveniently believed my every word. But to think, hehehe, that you, with your unwavering loyalty, that you, loyal guard dogs, would go so far as to turn your fangs against the Dragon God himself..."

"Preposterous... Then... you said... when you asked us for our help to stop Lord Dragon God..."

"Oh—HAHAHAHAHAHA!"

The Human God laughed.



"My performance was quite something, wasn't it? Honestly, I only expected that it would ensure Dragon God was the sole attacker on the Human World... but, hehe, fufufu, HAHAHAHAHAHA!"

He looked at Szilard and laughed, as if finding him endlessly amusing.

"Thanks to you, the Dragon God left himself completely open! The Dragon God! The most troublesome god of all, and I was able to kill him without a single scratch! You went so far as to prepare such an elaborate scheme to defy your master! How utterly stupid! What is wrong with you people!? I merely fanned the flames a little, and you went this far!? And to think you all were yapping all about loyalty! You make me laugh so much you're killing me! Oh, I do feel sorry for the Dragon God, poor thing! I've never seen more devoted idiots than you all!"

"Ah... aah... ah..."

Come to think of it, Szilard's actions had been strange as well.

I had never found them unnatural, but—he had been the one to propose war in the first place. He had been the one to say we should stop Lord Dragon God. Long ago, he had even killed a Demon King without Lord Dragon God's orders. Szilard—the most cunning and clever of the Five Dragon Generals.

Had been deceived.

He had danced to the tune of the Human God's words, orchestrating a war between worlds, leading Lord Dragon God to his death. When the truth was thrust upon him, Szilard cried out:

"Lord Dragon Gooooood...!"

With his remaining arm, he severed both his legs. He ripped out the half-broken fangs that remained and gouged out his own eyes. Lastly, he thrust his fist into his own chest, grasping his heart.

"Forgive meeeee—!"

And then, he raised his heart high—crushing it in his grasp.

With a wet, bursting sound, his heart ruptured—and Szilard's arm fell limply to the ground.

Following after Crystal, Szilard died.

The second Dragon to perish.

A Dragon General with ephemeral eyes and silver-green scales.

A man who earned the title of Holy Dragon Emperor through his military achievements in the war against the Demons.

True to his own words, he took his own life with his own hands.

It was his final act of loyalty.

Deceived by the enemy, leading Lord Dragon God to his death—this was the only way left for him to prove his devotion. This was all he could do.

"Oh dear, to be so disgusted by your own stupidity that you commit suicide? How truly pathetic and stupid... fufu, hehehe, AHAHAHAHAHA!"

The Human God laughed at his loyalty.

Even now, the memory makes me grit my teeth hard enough to shatter them. That wretched god laughed. At Szilard's devotion to Lord Dragon God. At the pride of the Five Dragon Generals.

But we had no words to respond with. Because we were, in fact, stupid, pathetic and miserable. We had been deceived by the Human God, blindly followed Szilard's words without questions, and led Lord Dragon God to his death. The weight of the truth was overwhelming.

Too overwhelming.

It was so heavy that, despite my frustration, I couldn't find a single word to refute it.

"Don't laugh."

"Hmm?"

The one who silenced the laughter of the Human God was not one of the Dragon Generals.

"Szilard was a loyal servant. I will not allow you to laugh at him."

"Oh my, you're still alive? Geckos really are resilient, huh?"

It was Lord Dragon God.

Even after having his God Gem gouged out, Lord Dragon God was still alive.

"And yet, you say you won't allow it? Do you really think you can still give me orders in this situation?"

"...Szilard's judgment was not wrong. Had I been in his place, I would have done the same. This is all my own fault. If you must laugh at someone, laugh at me."

"What are you even saying? I've been laughing at you all...along..."

Lord Dragon God's killing intent surged.

Even on the verge of death, Lord Dragon God exuded an overwhelming presence. It was his fury that gave him such power. Feeling that killing intent, cold sweat formed on the Human God's forehead.

"Human God. No... whatever you are, wearing the guise of the Human God. Answer my questions."

"Y-you... you're in no... position..."

"Who are you? Why did you want war? What do you intend to do by killing the Gods? ...And why did you kill Lunaria?"

Those were no mere questions.

It was a command.

Had we, the Five Dragon Generals, been in his place, we would have stood at attention and spilled our foolish thoughts in response.

"......!"

The Human God did not answer.

He did not obey the command.

Instead... he crushed Lord Dragon God's Gem in his grasp. With a brittle crack, the God Gem shattered.

"Guh—!"

The next moment, Lord Dragon God coughed up a massive amount of blood. That God Gem was the same Lord Dragon God had obtained every time he defeated a God. A Gem that held the power to traverse worlds—the very source of a God’s power.

"How long do you think you can keep acting like you're above me!? Enough of this! You lost! To me!"

The Human God howled, stomping on Lord Dragon God who had fallen to the ground. He stomped on him again and again.

"Why did I kill Lunaria? Why did I want war? The answer is obvious—to kill you! You, who possessed the greatest power yet refused to fight more than anyone else! You, who were more cautious than anyone, never letting down your guard! Ha! And just as planned, look at you now!"

Lord Dragon God's body no longer had any strength left.

Yet, his presence did not fade.

His killing intent, his oppressive aura—only continued to grow.

"Ugh...! What the hell are you!? Shit!"

The Human God faltered under that murderous intent. Even as he lay there dying, Lord Dragon God continued to intimidate him. He poured all his anger, all his murderous intent into that glare.

The one he loved most had been murdered, he'd been forced to fight against the Gods he once walked alongside, and even had his own subordinates turn their fangs against him. All that rage—

"Ha! Glaring at me won't change anything. You're going to die here! And I will be the one and only God!"

The Human God sneered as he stepped back, then floated up into the sky.

He raised his palm upward.

A tremendous sphere of light began to form, its density overwhelming.

"Perish, Dragon World."

There was no time to stop it.

No—even if there had been time, there was no stopping it.

The Human God unleashed the sphere from his hand.

It shot high up, drawn toward the land of the Dragon World, as if it was being sucked in, and then... Explosions. Light. A shockwave that consumed the world. By the time the light faded, the world had begun to collapse. The earth cracked and crumbled, while darkness surged up from the sky.

It was a sight I had seen many times before, though it was slightly different from before.

The sight of a world being destroyed.

"Hahaha, farewell, Dragon God. You can die here, miserably."

With that taunt, the Human God slowly drifted away. All I could do was watch as the whole thing unfolded. If I were there now, I would have surely attacked the Human God.

I would never have forgiven such brutality—stomping upon Lord Dragon God. I would never have tolerated the insult to the Dragon Generals.

But back then, none of us understood.

Not me, not Kháos, not Maxwell.

We didn't understand what had happened.

What had truly occurred.

Among the Five Dragon Generals, the only one who grasped the full truth—was the dead Szilard. All we knew was that something irreversible, something utterly horrifying, had transpired. That much, at least, was clear.

"Laplace."

The voice that brought me back to my senses—was none other than Lord Dragon God's.

"L-Lord Dragon God... I-I'm here."

Forcing my trembling legs to move, I walked toward him. He was still alive. His God Gem was destroyed, his body was covered in wounds, he had injuries inflicted by the other Gods—and yet, he still lived.

"Kháos, Maxwell."

"Lord Dragon God... we..."

"It is fine."

"But had we only followed your commands, Lord Dragon God... Please forgive us. No, even if you do not forgive us, please, order us to die. Command us to hunt down the Human God and strike that evil god down."

"I forgive you. All of this happened because my words were lacking."

Lord Dragon God forgave Kháos and Maxwell. Easily.

He forgave us, who had betrayed him.

"I now grant you a mission."

"Yes, sir!" "Yes!"

"The Dragon World is collapsing. There is little time... In that span, I will devise a way to kill the Human God. You will use your lives to buy me that time."

“Buy time” he said but... what exactly that entailed, I did not yet know. Right now, my mind can think a little better than before, but even so... how could I possibly stop the destruction of the world...? Yet, they did not hesitate for even a moment when given their final orders.

"...Yes!"

Kháos and Maxwell took flight, while Lord Dragon God turned his head.

"Dola, where is Dola?"

Lord Dragon God called out the name of Lady Dola.

But Lady Dola... was done for.

Her body could no longer move.

"Laplace."

"Yes."

I did not need to hear the rest.

I moved to Lady Dola’s side to witness her final moments.

"Lady Dola."

"...Haa... haa... That voice... Laplace? What happened? I can’t see anything anymore."

Lady Dola was on the verge of death. She barely had the strength left to think. Even so, she understood that something terrible had happened. With her fading consciousness, she desperately asked.

"The Human God..."

I told her everything I had seen—everything that had happened. That it was all the Human God’s scheme. That the war had been orchestrated by the Human God’s machinations, leading to Szilard taking responsibility by dying. That Lord Dragon God would soon die at the hands of the Human God. That the Dragon World was doomed, soon to be destroyed.

Everything.

"I see... Then I, too, must atone my sin with my death... Not that it matters though, as I am already dying..."

Lady Dola gazed vacantly into the air and spoke to me.

"Laplace... I have a favor to ask."

"Please, command me as you will."

"It is not an order... but a request... I knew I would be judged as a traitor, so I let my son... Perugius... escape. Please..."

"You let him escape? Where to?"

"To the future... the means... are in the teleportation research facility... please, let Lord Dragon God too..."

I did not understand what Lady Dola meant.

But I would soon find out. For now, I set it aside.

"So, in the end, just as I thought, Lord Dragon God's words were correct... We were wrong, weren’t we... That alone... is a relief. To know that fighting Lord Dragon God was a mistake... it’s truly... a relief..."

Those were Lady Dola’s final words.

She must have always wondered that. Was it right to stop Lord Dragon God? Even if it meant fighting? And now, after hearing everything, she had her answer. Then, she died.

The third Dragon to perish, after Szilard.

She passed away thinking not of herself, nor even of her son's fate, but of her loyalty to Lord Dragon God above all else.

To the very end, she remained loyal.

"....."

After witnessing Lady Dola’s passing, I returned to Lord Dragon God. And I conveyed her final words.

After a brief moment of thought, Lord Dragon God spoke.

"Laplace. Take my body to the teleportation research facility."

"Yes."

I lifted Lord Dragon God's body with one hand and took off.

Naturally, in my other hand, I carried the Young Master.

For several minutes, I flew, dodging the mountains that rained down from above. Eventually, I arrived at a certain place. A secret location I had been brought to once before. The teleportation research facility.

"This is... Lord Dragon God."

"How tragic..."

The elderly researchers were all still there. Having long accepted their impending deaths, they showed no distress over the world's collapse. But upon seeing the wounded Lord Dragon God, they all voiced their concerns, asking what had happened and whether he was alright. Lord Dragon God did not respond. He simply stated, "The time has come." With solemn expressions, the elderly researchers stepped aside, allowing us to proceed to the innermost chamber.

Inside, there was an altar and a stone monument.

The boundary of the world.

An altar similar to the gates to other worlds. The stone monument was inscribed with intricate layers of magic circles.

And atop the altar lay three God Gems.

"Laplace, place my Son here."

I followed his words and laid the Young Master upon the altar. Lord Dragon God staggered away from me and leaned against the altar. As I wondered what he intended to do, he began inscribing a magic circle around the Young Master. It was a spell far too advanced for my past self to understand, but I could at least tell that he was reproducing the inscriptions from the stone monument. Lord Dragon God only needed a few seconds to comprehend it all.

"The collapse of the Dragon World cannot be stopped. I, too, will die. We have lost."

Lord Dragon God spoke in a matter-of-fact tone, confirming reality.

"Even so, he must be slain."

The Human God had murdered Lady Lunaria. He had manipulated us, making us dance in the palm of his hand, bringing ruin to the other worlds. He had pitted the Five Dragon Generals against Lord Dragon God, leading us all to destruction. I could never forgive him.

"That being is not the real Human God. The true Human God was never that kind of man... Man-God, yes. Let us call this being 'Man-God.' I do not know why he mimics the Human God, nor where the real one has gone, but what is certain is that he has malicious intent to destroy us, and that he holds the power of a God."

"....."

"To defeat him, we will need the power of a God too."

Lord Dragon God looked straight at me.

"After this, I will cross over to the Human World and challenge him to a final battle."

"Y-Your body... You cannot fight in that state."

"I know. My death is inevitable. I stand no chance of victory. But I can at least strike a final blow."

Saying this, Lord Dragon God took one of the God Gems and pressed it into his chest. Blood dripped down, and his body began to glow. His dying body regained a faint trace of strength.

"However, that one strike must pave the way to victory. Thus—"

Lord Dragon God said this, took one of the God Gems, and placed it beside the Young Master... right in a small, slightly rounded concave spot.

"I will reincarnate my son."

The Young Master carried the blood of Lord Dragon God and the blood of the Human God. He was a demi-god with a very strong bloodline.

One who possessed the power of a God.

"I will bestow upon my son all my abilities and I will put measures in place to ensure he remains concealed until he gains the power necessary to defeat the Man-God... But even so, there is little chance of victory. I do not know why he takes the appearance of the Human God or why he possesses the power of a God. If we do not unravel that mystery, defeat is inevitable."

Then, Lord Dragon God looked at me, took the last God Gem in his hand... and extended it toward me.

"I have a task for you."

"Yes!"

I accepted it and gave him my deepest bow.

Looking back, it was the bow I had learned for Lord Dragon God's sake...

And it became the last one I ever gave him.

"I will send my Son tens of thousands of years into the future. During that time, you must uncover the Man-God's true identity, where he came from, his weaknesses... Find a way to defeat him and give that information to my Son!"

"Understood!"

As Lord Dragon God issued these commands to me, he continued to imbue the Young Master with countless enhancements. It was a complex, intricate spell. Even now, I do not fully understand what kinds of magic was applied. But I knew one thing—it was power meant to oppose the "Human God." After all, the Man-God possessed the same powers as the Human God.

As the sounds of destruction echoed from outside, I silently waited for the process to be completed. I watched as Lord Dragon God methodically drew and embedded magic circles onto the Young Master's body.

Lord Dragon God must have foreseen this outcome.

That things would end this way. Perhaps, ever since we—the Five Dragon Generals—defected. Thinking back, he could have ignored our opposition and gone to the Human World regardless. But Lord Dragon God must have judged that doing so would not lead to victory.

If the Five Dragon Generals turned against him and joined the enemy, he would not be able to avoid the traps that were probably laid in the Human World and reach the Man-God.

That was why he sought another path to victory.

Even as the Dragon Generals prepared countermeasures against Lord Dragon God, he never stopped thinking.

"One last thing—Is there anything else you would like to ask?"

Having completed the final magic circle, Lord Dragon God asked me that. I slowly began to shake my head, then stopped and looked up. There was one thing I had to ask.

"The name."

"The name?"

"The Young Master's name."

This was the end. If so, I had to ask.

This was something I could not decide on my own. It was also Lady Lunaria's wish that Lord Dragon God be the one to name him.

"....."

Lord Dragon God pondered briefly. But he must have already decided.

"Orsted."

He spoke softly.

"This child's name is Orsted."

Thus, the Young Master... Lord Orsted was sent into the future.

Lord Dragon God and I escaped from the collapsing research facility and headed for the Human World.

Lord Dragon God left me behind and went on ahead. Before parting, I wished him good fortune, to which he replied:

"My luck and my life have already run out."

Those were the last words I ever heard from him. I leaped onto Saleyakt, dodging the falling boulders as I flew toward the altar. While in flight, I sensed something vanishing behind me. Two presences.

Kháos and Maxwell.

The two who had literally staked their lives to halt the collapse... had died.

Kháos, the fourth Dragon to perish.

Maxwell, the last Dragon to perish.

Perhaps the order was reversed, but that was how I remembered it.

Thanks to their sacrifice, I barely managed to escape from the collapsing Dragon World.

By the time I arrived in the Human World, the battle had already begun.

The clash between Gods had brought forth cataclysms upon the Human World. Tornadoes, torrential rains, tsunamis, earthquakes, thunder. And the overwhelming fear and hatred that spread throughout the world... The pressure from the Gods had caused all living beings to fear the Dragonfolk.

But more than that, I was shocked.

The Human World had changed drastically. It had been so long since I was last there that I could not remember when it was...

The Human World should have been nothing but endless plains and rivers. And yet, there were mountains, forests, oceans, wilderness, and deserts. A world that seemed to have condensed six different worlds into one. Most likely, the collapse of other worlds had caused the mana to flow into this world, reshaping the Human World.

From my perspective, it was an imbalance. But looking back now, I can see that the world had formed a new equilibrium.

I landed atop one of the mountains while still astride Saleyakt.

The highest mountain in this world.

From there, I watched the battle unfold.

I did not know where Lord Dragon God and the Man-God were fighting. But I prayed for Lord Dragon God's victory. Even if the chances were one in ten thousand, I could not help but hope.

Eventually, the battle ended.

The thunder and tornadoes subsided, and the roaring echoes faded.

Only the rain continued to fall silently.

For seven days and seven nights.

On the eighth day, the sky was a clear, brilliant blue.

There was no wind, and the sea lay still.

No trace of any God’s mighty presence remained.

Neither Lord Dragon God nor the Man-God.

And I understood.

Lord Dragon God was gone.

And thus, the Dragon World was destroyed.

Chapter 23: And So, Towards a New Story

"And this is... where the story ends."

With those words, Laplace let out a sigh. The tension in his shoulders eased, and the clenched teeth loosened.

However, his face remained pale and still bore traces of sharp intensity. The anger, the resentment, and the helplessness had not faded. Just recalling those times must have been painful for him.

"And... what happened after that?"

Rostelina asked hesitantly.

"Hm? After that?"

"After you descended into the Human World. What about the others from the Dragon World? What happened Master?"

"Oh dear, Rostelina, you mustn't ask so many questions at once."

Laplace gave a weak smile but answered nonetheless.

"Most of the Dragonfolk perished. Though, of course, some managed to escape from the Dragon World and descended here into the Human World. The Dragon World's collapse was far swifter than that of the other worlds, so only a very small number made it."

Hearing this, Rostelina felt a slight relief, but she quickly realized there was something more to it.

"Then... why is it that there are hardly any Dragonfolk left now?"

"...They were slaughtered."

"W-Why?"

"You understand, don’t you? Even if the mastermind was the Man-God, we destroyed too much."

Hatred, fury, and fear toward the Dragonfolk had been deeply ingrained in the other races. So, what would happen when the surviving Dragonfolk came to the Human World? The very thing the Five Dragon Generals had feared had happened.

"Well, there was also the fact that the number of survivors was simply too small."

"Lord Laplace, did you not help those people?"

"No... I didn’t help them."

"Why not?"

"Because I had something I needed to do."

Laplace carried a critical mission on his shoulders.

Just before his death, Lord Dragon God had entrusted him with a great purpose. It was not to aid the Dragonfolk, whose numbers had fallen below what was necessary for their survival as a species.

"After the battle between Lord Dragon God and the Man-God, I searched for the Man-God. But I couldn’t find him. It’s likely that, even in a battle he was destined to lose, Lord Dragon God managed to land a decisive blow, either gravely injuring or sealing him away."

"Did you ever consider that they might have ended up killing each other?"

"There was a time when I thought so. But before long, the Man-God started interfering with me indirectly. That was proof that he was still alive."

As the last surviving member of the Five Dragon Generals, Laplace began his work in the Human World. He sought out the vanished Man-God’s whereabouts and true nature, searching for weaknesses and ways to kill him—so that he could pass that knowledge on to Lord Dragon God's successor, Orsted, who would arrive in the future.

"What exactly is the Man-God? What was his goal in doing such terrible things...?"

"Hahaha, unfortunately, I haven't uncovered his true nature. As for his goal, I can make some guesses, but most of it is still a mystery... Though, I do have one hypothesis."

"What is it?"

Rostelina instinctively asked, and Laplace responded.

"When I first arrived in the Human World, I was shocked by what I saw. The Human World was supposed to be a World of endless plains, a world where nothing but flat land stretched as far as the eye could see. But somehow,

there were forests, mountains, and oceans. And within them, people from all the different worlds were living. It was as if six worlds had been merged into one... Yes, the very world you know so well now. Furthermore, when Lord Dragon God was slain, the Man-God said something: 'I will be the one and only god.'"

Piecing this information together, Laplace arrived at a single conclusion.

"He must have wanted to become a God. The one and only God of a single, unified world. That's why he destroyed each of the other worlds, absorbing them into one, and why he slaughtered all the other Gods. The question is—how did the Man-God obtain power equal to that of a God?"

Laplace placed a hand on his chin, pondering for a moment before looking at Rostelina.

"I mentioned this at the start, didn't I? At the very beginning, there was a single God — the Creator God. He died. And after his death, no one knew what became of him... Was it Lord Dragon God who told me that? Or was it Lady Lunaria...? Either way, about that Creator God... where do you think he went?"

"...No way."

"I believe he perished in the Barren World."

"The Barren World?"

"A space of absolute nothingness, through which one passes when traveling between worlds. The Creator God died at its very center... and one day, that being found him. And he claimed the corpse as his own. Using the power of the God's corpse, he either replaced or absorbed the weakest of all Gods — the Human God. And the rest... played out exactly as I've described."

"...Huh..."

"Of course, this is just speculation. In the end, the Man-God's true intentions remain unknown."

To Laplace, however, the Man-God's goals and origins no longer mattered.

Even if he was the Human God himself, even if there had been some justifiable reason for killing Lord Dragon God, none of it mattered. Laplace had investigated, formulated countless theories, but in the end, his purpose remained unchanged.

To kill the Man-God—the one who trampled upon the pride of Lord Dragon God and the Five Dragon Generals.

"...So, where is the Man-God now?"

"Hmm? Well, he’s in the Barren World, of course."

"How do you know that?"

"Partly because he wasn’t anywhere in the Human World... But more than that, there was a seal—no, a barrier, maybe? Something like that, set up around the Barren World. It was probably something Lord Dragon God created by squeezing out the last of his power. Though there's also a chance the Man-God made it himself out of fear... Either way, if there was nothing there, there’d be no reason to set up something so elaborate."

"As long as that barrier exists, does that mean there's no way to reach the Man-God?"

"I've already figured out how to undo it, but it would take an enormous amount of mana and a rather massive device. And even if I went, if I lost, the Man-God would be unleashed. If that happens, everything I've worked for will be ruined. I can't just rush into it."

Laplace said this with a slightly bitter expression. He likely wanted to break the seal right now and fight the Man-God. To avenge Lord Dragon God, to clear the regrets of the Five Dragon Generals.

But he wouldn’t act recklessly.

He was preparing, slowly and carefully. One step at a time, he was creating everything needed to ensure the Man-God's demise.

"Lord Laplace... this must be painful for you, isn't it?"

"Thinking about the past... yeah, it hurts. But when I think about the future, it’s not so bad. Lord Orsted will descend and use everything I’ve prepared to fight the Man-God. The martial arts, magic, technology, weapons, and knowledge I’ve created—using all of it. No, not just Lord Orsted. The surviving Dragonfolk and even Perugius will fight alongside him as well. The entire Dragonfolk race will be throwing everything they have into this battle against the Man-God. Just thinking about that moment makes my heart race."

Laplace said this with a smile.

He had been preparing.

At first, it must have been agonizing. With nothing but the goal of defeating the Man-God, he had to build everything from scratch.

But thousands of years had made it possible.

He had done countless things.

He passed down the Dragonfolk's techniques and magic to the Humans, who grew quickly, while he himself studied the secret techniques used by the Five Dragon Generals and Lord Dragon God.

Later, when the Humans refined and improved those techniques and magic on their own, he took them back, further refined them, and passed them on again. He analyzed the spell likely cast on Orsted, deducing it from just a single glance at the magic circles, and prepared countermeasures to eliminate the negative effects it might have on him.

That wasn't all.

He even prepared for the worst-case scenario—his own death at the Man-God's hands. He distributed secret treasures, crafted from fragments of the deceased Dragon God's God Gem, to the descendants of the Five Dragon Generals he found across the land. And he built ruins all over the world, leaving behind the results of his research.

He did everything he possibly could.

Even now, he couldn't say everything was perfect, but he had always strived for 100%. He had anticipated and prepared for every possible scenario. Perhaps that's why he no longer felt the pain of it all. He had overcome his dark past, and now, he could see a bright future.

"....."

And that's exactly why Rostelina felt it.

A sense of alienation.

Laplace's battle. The war between the Dragonfolk and the Man-God—she had no place in it. And that realization filled her with sorrow.

"Um, Lord Laplace!"

"What is it?"

"Is... is there anything I can do?"

For a brief moment, Laplace looked surprised by Rostelina's words. But then, he gave her a gentle smile and patted her head.

"You've already been a great help. Cleaning, laundry... But it's not just that. Ever since I came to the Human World, I've been alone. Your presence has healed my heart. Just you being here is enough for me."

Laplace had taken her in on a whim. Of course, there had been a calculated element to it—he thought she might be useful in some way. After all, the vast Magic Power sleeping within her body was a rare and valuable thing. But he hadn't had a specific use in mind from the beginning.

And in the end, Laplace was still just as any other person. After living together for so long, he had grown attached to her. Now, she was becoming his one and only source of comfort.

"I don't like that! I want to be useful to you too, Lord Laplace! I might not be able to fight alongside you, but there has to be something, anything I can do! Something that will help the Young Master in the future... anything...!"

Of course, Rostelina wouldn't simply accept his words and stay put. She had spent all this time doing nothing. Just waiting for Laplace to return. Even if that brought him comfort, it didn't satisfy her. No matter the era, simply being made to wait was always painful.

"Hmm..."

And Laplace understood that pain well.

After all, he had been waiting all this time—for the Dragon Child, Orsted.

Unlike Rostelina, he had plenty to keep himself occupied, but if he had nothing to do and was forced to wait endlessly, he might have gone mad.

"Alright. If you're that determined, I'll let you help."

That was why Laplace said those words.

"! Is there something I can do too!?"

"Yes, but it might be painful for you."

"What is it!? I'll do anything!"

"First, I'll remove the magic circle from your body and restore the curse to its original state."

"...Eh."

Hearing that her curse would be restored, Rostelina's face turned slightly pale. The thing that had once dragged her into the depths of despair was going to return.

It was an instinctive fear.

"After that, using the secret technique of the Demons, I'll gradually reshape your body. You'll be able to store your immense Magic Power and give it to others."

"To others...?"

"Yes. Lord Orsted has been imbued with numerous techniques for the sake of defeating the Man-God. As long as those techniques remain, his mana will continue to deplete. It's possible that the mana consumption is far greater than we anticipated, it might even surpass the amount of mana gained by his natural recovery rate."

"Ah, so my Magic Power will help with that."

"Exactly. But until the secret techniques are fully implemented and your body is transformed into its ideal state, it will require multiple adjustments. It will take time. A hundred, two hundred years... perhaps even a thousand or two thousand years. During that time, you will fall into a deep sleep. You won't be able to live as you have until now."

"If everything is over by the time I wake up, then that's fine."

"Moreover, the transformation of your body will inevitably affect your mind, and the passage of time will make your memories fade."

"Does that mean... I'll lose my personality and my memories of you, Master?"

"Yes. Of course, I'll make adjustments along the way to help you retain your memories."

"... If you say so, Master, then I'll be fine."

"So, you're saying you can endure it?"

"Yes."

At Rostelina’s response, Laplace's expression darkened slightly. He knew that their way of life would come to an end. He knew that the voice that resounded through his home would disappear. He knew that Rostelina, whose presence reminded him of the warm life he once had in the Dragon World, would no longer be there.

That’s why, hesitation flickered within him for a moment.

But if Rostelina wished to act for his sake—no, for the sake of Lord Dragon God—then Laplace had no words to stop her.

After all, Laplace was one of the Five Dragon Generals. Even if it was now only in name, he was still one of them. How could he reject someone willing to fight for Lord Dragon God?

"I see... Then, come. Let’s begin the preparations."

Laplace forced a smile as he said that.

Far away from Dragon Roar Mountain, in a subterranean cavern.

There was a place Laplace used as one of his research facilities. It was constructed from stones engraved with countless massive magic circles. The entire cavern itself was a giant magical device.

At its deepest chamber, she lay there.

Submerged in faintly glowing water, eyes closed, in slumber.

"—And so, the saint defeated the Demon king and returned to the one he loved."

Laplace sat before her, speaking softly.

It was an old tale.

A story of a hero from the Human World that Laplace had once seen.

"Well, that’s it for today’s story."

As he finished, Laplace slowly stood up.

"I’m heading off to battle again. I have no way of knowing what the Man-God is thinking, but he must be stopped. Not once has anything he’s done ever led to a good outcome."

Saying that, Laplace extended his hand over Rostelina. A transparent lid slowly descended over her resting place. Once the lid was completely sealed and the interior filled with the softly glowing water, Laplace gently ran his hand over it.

"I’ll continue the story when I return. Don’t worry—there’s no story as tragic as the one from the Dragon World."

With that, Laplace turned on his heel.

"Just be patient and wait for me."

The sound of his footsteps echoed as he walked away from the platform.

As he distanced himself, the lights in the room gradually dimmed.

Eventually, his footsteps disappeared completely, and darkness swallowed the chamber.

Rostelina had no consciousness.

But Laplace's words had surely reached the depths of her slumbering mind.

She was waiting.

Waiting for the day when the adjustments to the secret techniques would be completed, and she could finally be of use to Laplace.

Forever waiting in the darkness.

Always Waiting.

Forever...

Waiting...

Old Dragon's Tale

– The End –

The Story of the Six Faced World Continues in:

Subjugation of the King of the King Dragons

Chronology of the History

Age	Armored Dragon Calendar	Events in the World:
	Over 100,000 years ago	Age of the Ancient Gods: The Dragon God, Sea God, Sky God, Beast God, Demon God, Human God, and the Void God each rule over their respective worlds.
	20,000 to 10,000 years ago	The Dragon God was destroying the neighboring worlds. The Dragon World collapses due to the betrayal of the Five Dragon Generals, only the human world remains
	10,000 to 8,000 years ago	Age of Chaos The residents of the collapsed worlds migrated to the human world and fought each other in various places.
	Approximately 7,000 years ago	First Great Human-Demon War
	Approximately 6,000 years ago	The hero Ars led six comrades to defeat the Five Great Demon Kings and the Demon Emperor Kishirika, ending the Great Human-Demon War
	Approximately 5,500 years ago	Warring States Period
	5,000 years ago	Second Great Human-Demon War Begins
	4,200 years ago	Battle between the Golden Knight Aldebaran and the Demon Emperor Kishirika & Demon King Badigadi. The last explosion splits the giant continent into the Central Continent and the Demon Continent, ending the Second Human-Demon Great War
	4,200 to 1,000 years ago	The demons are sealed on the Demon Continent through diplomatic negotiations by the human race.
	1,000 years ago	The Demon God Laplace is born Unification of the Demon Continent
	500 years ago	The Laplace War Begins
	??? years ago	Midway of the Laplace War Laplace bestows the Devil's Spear upon the Superd tribe.
	Year 1 of the Armored Dragon Calendar	Demon God Laplace is Sealed Among the Seven Heroes, the Dragon God Urupen, the North God Kalman, and the Dragon King Perugius are the only survivors, known as the Three Demon God Slaying Heroes.

TALES FROM THE SIX FACED WORLD
OLD DRAGON'S TALE

Rifujin's Blog

First Part Blogs

Spoiler Warning

For those who are Reading this Book After Volume 15 or 17.

Old Dragon's Tale was written after Mushoku Tensei ended in the Web Novel format. Hence, some questions here might have spoilers from future events and even events in the final arc. Specially those Blogs from the second part of the story.

Read this section under your own risk.

Note: When these blogs were written, Volume 12 from the Light Novel had just been published and the Drama CD was being produced. When ODT finished, the Drama CD came next and Volume 13 had been published. Hence, some things have changed in later publications and even in Redundancy Web Novel and now some answers here are no longer canon.

Old Dragon's Tale + Author's Notes

October 26, 2016 (Wednesday) 16:39

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1547920/

Hello everyone, long time no see.

This is Rifujin na Magonote.

After half a year of struggling with this idea, I've finally gotten it into shape, so I've decided to start serializing it.

The title is "Old Dragon's Tale."

It's not really much of a spoiler, but the story is about Laplace.

The format is essentially Laplace telling an old tale to a mysterious girl, X.

At first, I wrote it in the first person, but I had trouble presenting information effectively. Then I tried a third-person perspective, but that made it feel like a setting guide rather than a story. After some trial and error, I settled on this format.

The planned length is around 20 chapters.

However, since I only have about 14 chapters stocked up at the moment, I'll likely take a break around chapter 10 and then return later with the second half.

This is my first time writing in this format, so there may be some rough spots, but I hope you enjoy it.

Reader's Questions

Q: When in the timeline does this take place?

- You'll figure it out in due time.

Q: Some characters' names remind me of characters from your previous work. That's just my imagination, right?

- It's just your imagination.

Q: "The pinnacle of the Demon World is humanity, in other words, demons." Wait, humans = demons!? Aren't humans supposed to be part of the human race? Shouldn't the term be "Demon Person" instead?[21]

- "Humans" in the Demon World = Demons.

Meaning:
"Humans" in the Human World = Humans.
"Humans" in the Dragon World = Dragonfolk.

Q: Is this close to a side story of "Mushoku Tensei"?

- It's close, but it's not a side story.

That's all for now.

[21] There was confusion in the second chapter as Rifuijin used "ningen" (人間), which is usually used for "human", so people were asking why didn't he used "Demon Person" or "Majin" (魔人), but in this context "Ningen" was "Person" or "People."

Old Dragon's Tale - Author's Notes

October 27, 2016 (Thursday) 18:15

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1548782/

Recently, I started riding a bike to improve my fitness.

Nothing bad came up in my health check, but I thought it might be good for me. Since I'm an adult, I figured I should get a road bike, even a cheap one!

So, I bought one and rode around—until I encountered a pedestrian bridge.

Out of old habits, I tried to just glide down the stairs.

But road bikes have their center of gravity toward the front, right?

A front-heavy bike.

A steep downward slope.

And if you apply the brakes there, inertia does its thing.

I went flying.

I landed flat on my face at the stair's landing, half-crying as I reattached the chain.

Limping down the pedestrian bridge, I came across a sign.

It was a cutesy picture of Anpanman, and inside a speech bubble, it said:

"Walk your bike over pedestrian bridges! ♪"

I snorted.

What kind of idiot needs to be told that?

Then I realized:

Me.

I was the idiot.

Recovery time: one week.

Everyone, please be careful when riding bicycles.

Reader's Questions

Q: So, Laplace is a half-blood of both the Demon and Dragonfolk? That means Laplace the "Demon God" represents his Demon side, while Laplace the "Technique God" represents his Dragonfolk side?

- That’s exactly it.

Q: So even with the reincarnation method, you can’t change your sex?

- Don’t jump to conclusions too soon.

Q: So he’s the King of the Dragonfolk but he’s not treated like a God?

- They are considered Gods, but they aren’t as far removed from the world as the gods we know. The status as "King" makes it more understandable.

Q: Is Dola as benevolent as Pe-Sama? (Perugius)

- Dola is a loyal individual.

Q: Since it’s an old tale, will the story remain peaceful for a while?

- Yes, for now, it will be fairly peaceful.

Old Dragon's Tale - Author's Notes

October 28, 2016 (Friday) 16:29

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1549532/

I truly appreciate all the kind words I've received regarding my bicycle accident.

Next time, I'll make sure to fall better.

Reader's Questions

Q: Can this story actually appeal to first-time readers? As someone who has already read Mushoku Tensei, I have no idea. But for me, all the new bits of information are really exciting. Wouldn't it be better to take a break from the Mushoku Tensei world for a while? I love this world's setting, and I'd like to see other spin-offs or even the "main story" you mentioned before. But I also understand the readers who want something completely different. I just hope you write what you enjoy.

- I'm basically writing what I enjoy. I do have ideas for entirely different worlds, but if I focus too much on a completely separate setting, I might end up mixing things up when I return to writing Mushoku Tensei stories. And since I'm still able to publish books in this world, that would be a problem. So, I don't think I'll be writing a long-term series in a totally different world anytime soon. But I might write some short stories.

Q: When Rudeus summoned Arumanfi, was the fallen angel pose a forced magic-induced bow? (Vol. 16)

- You noticed that, huh?

Q: "Dragon Warrior's Nest"—is this like a Dragon Wrestler training facility?

-Dragonfolk are stronger than Dragons! With that mindset, they're thrown into a cage to fight a dragon barehanded.

Q: Braking on a steep downhill with the front brake is dangerous!

- Yeah... My bike shop and friends warned me to use the rear brake first. But when you react on instinct, you tend to use your dominant hand—which controls the front brake.

Old Dragon's Tale - Author's Notes

October 29, 2016 (Saturday) 18:41

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1550480/

Reader's Questions

Q: So, Dola-sama...

- In my original draft, sometimes I added "-sama" to "Dola," and sometimes I didn't. I tried fixing it manually, but I knew I'd miss some. So I thought, Hey! I'll do a mass replace of "Dola" → "Dola-sama"! But that made some lines turn into "Dola-sama-sama." Oops.

Q: Is "King Dragon King"(キングドラゴンキング) the correct way to read 王竜王 (Oryuou)?

- Meta-wise, I first came up with "King Dragon Kingdom" (キングドラゴンキングダム), then shortened it into "King Dragon" and eventually "King Dragon King."

Q: "Next time, I'll fall better." Uh, please take a proper defensive position (not really).

- Even when you try to be careful, sometimes you just fall. Knowing how to take a hit is important.

Q: So Dragonfolk aerial mobility is like a bird, while Laplace moves more like a bat?

- More or less.

Old Dragon's Tale – Author's Notes

October 30, 2016 (Sunday) 15:49

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1551250/

Today's update is a bit short, around 5,000 characters.

Tomorrow's update, however, will be longer—about 14,000 characters.

Personally, I'd like to keep chapters between 7,000 to 10,000 characters, but it's proving quite difficult.

Reader's Questions

Q: Given diseases like Dryne Syndrome, it wouldn't be strange for humans in that era to have lifespans of around 10 years, right?

- That's true. However, lifespans of around 10 years only applied in the very early times. Over time, they extended to 20 or 30 years. From Laplace's perspective, whether it's 10 years or 100 years, it's still a "short lifespan," so I left it vague in the writing.

Q: The villain reminds me of a demon from an arcade gun-shooting game, lol. Are you talking about The Emperor from House of the Dead 2? (Who was also the final boss in House of the Dead 1?)

- Maybe Turvage from "Cobra: The Arcade"?

Q: Do dragons grow endlessly like crocodiles?

- Not exactly, but their average size fluctuates depending on environmental factors.

Q: "Laplace escaped the collapsing Dragon World"—Orsted says this line in Mushoku Tensei. Had this setting already been established back then?

- The setting was in place, yes. But when turning it into an actual story, contradictions arise. Some events lacked reasons, and too many explanatory passages made it unwieldy... (I should probably stop before I say too much.)

Q: Are dragons technically reptiles?

- Strictly speaking, no. They'd likely be categorized as Diapsids or Archosaurs. But let's be real—not many people would immediately recognize "Diapsid" or "Archosaur."

Old Dragon's Tale – Author's Notes

October 31, 2016 (Monday) 16:22

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1552213/

Today's update is slightly adjusted to 12,000 characters.

Reader's Questions

Q: The Dragonfolk seems to eat only meat, so I started wondering... Are they getting enough nutrients without eating any plants!? Then I looked it up and realized that even real-world carnivores indirectly consume plants by eating the organs of herbivores.

- But dragons eat meat so... their meat is a complete nutritional food.

Q: Do Demons and Dragonfolk have a set lifespan?

- Apparently, they do.

Q: What a happy and pleasant life! Surely this story will continue like this forever!

- It will! (It won't.)

Old Dragon's Tale – Author's Notes

November 1, 2016 (Tuesday) 15:53

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1553084/

It's that time of year—seasonal changes.

I've come down with a cold, but I hope you all stay healthy.

Reader's Questions

Q: Why do different races have such vastly different lifespans?

- Because they're inhabitants of a distorted world, created by a Creator God who no longer had the power to properly shape reality.

Q: What color were the Crystal Dragon's scales and eyes?

- Laplace never encountered him, so he doesn't know. Based on the color trends (white, green, blue, black), it might be red-silver with wise-looking eyes... perhaps?

Q: Which of these four groups is the most dangerous? The Five Dragon Generals? The Six Demonic Masters? The Seven Great World Powers? The Eight Great Demon Kings? [22]

- The Five Dragon Generals are the most terrifying.

Q: Dragonfolk taking 100 years to have children... isn't that way too long? How did the Dragonfolk avoid extinction when they were weak?

- Probably because Red Dragons only attacked once every decade or so.

Q: Is Crystal a Dragon General or a Dragon King?

- Crystal is one of the Five Dragon Generals—Steel Dragon King Crystal.

Q: If Szilard is supposed to be a Dragon Emperor, wouldn't that mean there's only one Dragon Emperor and four Dragon Kings?

- That's not how it works.

Q: It feels odd that Kháos and Maxwell could "Kill for disrespect" someone of equal or higher rank like Szilard without consequence.

---

[22] 7 Seas called them "The Demonic Circle of Six" instead of the "The Six Demonic Masters" for the group of Rudeus, Badigadi, Zanoba, Cliff, Linia and Pursena.

- I'm embarrassed to admit this but I struggled with the wording here. If you have a better suggestion, let me know.

Q: What kind of person was the Steel Dragon King Crystal?

- Who knows? I wonder what kind of person he was.

Old Dragon's Tale – Author's Notes

November 2, 2016 (Wednesday) 14:07

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1553878/

Starting to recover from the cold.

Reader's Questions

Q: Compared to the main Mushoku Tensei series, there seem to be more typos here. Are you rushing?

- There were typos in the main series too, you know... But yeah, I probably am rushing. If you spot typos, let me know and I'll fix them.

Q: About the "killing for disrespect" issue.

- Thanks for all the feedback. I still don't have a good solution, so for now, I'll leave it as-is.

Q: "Just when all hope seemed lost, a savior appeared! What a heartwarming story!"

- Fun fact: In Japanese, "Heartful" (ハートフル) is a made-up word that means "heartwarming." However, in English, "Heartful" does not exist. Instead, the correct words would be "Heartfelt" or "Hearty." If you say "Heartful" to an English speaker, they might mishear it as "Hurtful,"(ハートフル) which means painful or harmful. (Source: NicoNico Encyclopedia)

- Wow, what a pro writer. That's some next-level wordplay.

Well, that's all

Old Dragon's Tale – Author's Notes

November 3, 2016 (Thursday) 09:14

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1554507/

I forgot to announce this on Twitter, but today's scheduled post has gone up. I'm going on a trip today, so I might not be able to do a final check — apologies in advance. Today's update marks the end of the first half of the story.

Thanks for reading!

Reader's Questions

Q: If you feel unwell, you should skip bathing for a day. Just soak your feet and get some sleep.

- I always thought baths helped with colds, as long as you don't get chilled afterward.

Q: In Mushoku Tensei, Rudeus once joked about how "Bloody Kant" sounds like a really bad name. Was he implying it translates to something like 'bloody female genitalia' in English?

- There are actual people with the surname "Kant" in our world. So "Bloody" was likely a nickname, while "Kant" was just a regular name.

Q: It was just getting exciting, and now we have to wait!?

- Yup!

Q: So did that character introduce himself as "Jinshin" in that scene?[23]

- Yep.

Q: Does Laplace have a human appearance with wings?

- There's no official illustration, so feel free to imagine it however you like.

Q: Only dragons and Dragonfolk appear in the story, but are there herbivores too?

- There must be herbivorous dragons. Otherwise, the ecosystem wouldn't work.

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[23] When the Man-God presented himself to Laplace he did it under the name of "人神" and it is pronounced "ジンシン" = Jinshin (Human God) and not "Hitogami" (ヒトガミ).

Old Dragon's Tale – Author's Notes

November 4, 2016 (Friday) 15:24

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1555570/

And so, that concludes the first Part of Old Dragon's Tale!

Laplace climbed the ranks smoothly and got his happily-ever-after ending — nothing to complain about! For now, I'm taking a break after Chapter 11.

The next update is currently undecided, but I hope to resume before the end of the year. That said, if I'm saying "I hope so," that probably means it'll be tough in reality.

I'll do my best.

Reader's Questions

Q: This story takes place before the most recent Human-Demon War, meaning it's set before the birth of Demon God Laplace, right?

- Yeah, that's about right.

Q: So, the "saint deceived by an evil god" isn't Rudy, but someone else?

- Well, so far, there's only one person in that world who's been called a "saint."

Q: Was it Urupen who read the book Laplace wrote? If so, did Perugius already know who was the godfather that named him back during the Laplace War?

- Perugius probably didn't know.

Q: The Human God is such a great guy! Always helping out, granting blessings to heroes whenever a Demon King shows up. What a benevolent god! Rudy will be fine with him around.

- Yeah, totally fine! (Not suspicious at all.)

Q: So, I did some calculations. If we assume Roxy's hamburger-sized mana pool is 1,000 in volume, and Rudeus' "Moon Magic" capacity is 12,363,465,685.6, then if he fully recovers in ten days, that means he regenerates over 14 Roxy units per second.

- You really shouldn't take the numbers I throw out too seriously!

Second Part Blogs

Spoiler Warning

For those who are Reading this Book After Volume 15 or 17.

Old Dragon's Tale was written after Mushoku Tensei ended in the Web Novel format. From this point forward, you're truly entering dangerous spoiler territory about events from the final arc.

Read this section under your own risk.

Note: When these blogs were written, Volume 12 from the Light Novel had just been published and the Drama CD was being produced. When ODT finished, the Drama CD came next and Volume 13 had been published. Hence, some things have changed in later publications and even in Redundancy Web Novel and now some answers here are no longer canon.

Progress Update – Reincarnation

February 24, 2017 (Friday) 02:16

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1651204/

Starting tomorrow, I plan to update Old Dragon's Tale.

To be honest, if I were to update daily starting today, it would be cutting it really close schedule-wise. But March and April are looking to be busy again, and even May already seems like it's going to be hectic.

It feels like if I miss this timing, I might never be able to update again.

So, I'm going to update.

It's planned to be 12 chapters.

I'll do my best.

If you notice any inconsistencies or anything strange, please let me know.

Old Dragon's Tale + Author's Notes

February 25, 2017 (Saturday) 19:22

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1652587/

Reader's Questions

Q: Seeing the cast for the Drama CD, they match my mental image almost perfectly! I'm so happy!

- I'm happy to hear that too!

Q: How many thousands of years has Lunaria been pregnant...?

- A pretty long time.

Q: Demon Emperor Kirishisu Karishisu... Sounds like a fake name, but he actually seems more competent. So Kishirika is just a puppet? Both the Demon God and Kirishisu seem smart, so why did she turn out this way?

- When you live for tens of thousands of years, I guess you naturally end up seeming competent.

Q: I've been seriously waiting for this!

- Sorry for the delay. I don't like using "I've been busy" as an excuse, but I just haven't had enough time to write... I'll do my best.

Q: Something feels off about Laplace using the word "mosaic"... Well, if we think about mosaics in their original artistic sense (Paintings and Windows), I guess it makes sense? But it still feels weird, kind of modern.

- Mosaic art has existed since ancient times, apparently. As a term, it probably only spread in Japan a few hundred years ago, so I guess it does feel modern... But since I'm using easy-to-understand words, I'd appreciate it if you could overlook any sense of oddness.

That's all.

Old Dragon's Tale + Author's Notes

February 26, 2017 (Sunday) 17:21

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1653411/

Reader's Questions

Q: I've only been reading the feedback... It feels like if I look at the actual story, I'd lose somehow... What should I do...? (; ー_ー)

- Think of it this way: "Losing isn't so bad."

Q: So many over-the-top idiots. Were the demons in ancient times all like Atofe? Badi and Kishirika seem so over-the-top they look like idiots at first glance, but they're actually really smart, right?

- Badi, maybe. Kishirika... not so sure. She's probably teetering right on the edge of being an idiot, or maybe even completely over that line.

Q: Didn't the Man-God once give young Laplace some advice before? Isn't that going to be addressed? Or is that for later?

- Well, calm down. We'll get to the culprit eventually. But first, there are more important things to take care of.

Q: Being busy with work is a good thing. It's way worse when you go to the office, sit at your desk, and have nothing to do... That's just depressing.

- That does sound rough...

Q: "Aho" (idiot) is totally a Kansai dialect thing (´∀｀)

- Compared to "baka," "aho" feels more cheerful and lightheartedly dumb. I like it.

Q: All the other Gods came to celebrate, but the Beast God didn't? That's cold...

- I forgot. I added it in.

Q: "Being smart is good, and being dumb is also good... At least in the Demon World." Kind of a surprisingly kind worldview, huh?

- In this world, being smart isn't necessarily useful. They understand that.

Q: The Demon World is full of miasma, but are the attendants from other worlds, okay? I'd think human attendants wouldn't last long outside their own world... But then again, Lunaria-sama is naturally long-lived, so... wait, huh?

- They're not totally fine, but since they're chosen as God's Attendants, they can withstand it to some degree or have ways to protect themselves.

That's all.

P.S. Turns out it was 2014. Just how far back in time was I living...?

Old Dragon's Tale + Author's Notes

February 27, 2017 (Monday) 17:51

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1654318/

Reader's Questions

Q: "All gods are male" – But isn't the Sky God female?

- They're all male. The initial setting had the Sky God as female, but that got left behind somewhere. I've fixed the original text, but if you've already imagined him as female, just think of him as "a guy who looks like a girl" or "cross dresser."

Q: "Embarrassing to admit, but... I kind of leaked a little." ...He wears underwear, right? f(^_^;)

- People who leak out do it even without underwear.

Q: Even if it's just the Old Dragon arc, I hope the ending feels like a happy one in the end.

- I hope it does too.

Q: But if the story keeps getting sadder, it's a bit depressing... It's a tragedy, so I guess it can't be helped. At least the Demon Kings provide some comic relief!

- It is a tragedy, after all...

Old Dragon's Tale + Author's Notes

February 28, 2017 (Tuesday) 21:34

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1655380/

February is ending today.

Feels like New Year's just started, but time flies.

Reader's Questions

Q: If this ends in a bad ending, I hope the next story is just some dumb antics with Rudeus and the gang.

- The next story will probably be something dumb. But whether it's about Rudeus and the gang... that's another question.

Q: The Human God and Dragon God are fragments of the Creator God, so they are gods... But they don't seem to have the power to shape the world or control fate. There are six gods for the Six-Faced World. The Fighting God was created by Laplace who later became the Demon God, right?

- This world has a lot of so-called "Gods" in name only.

Q: The first Dragon God hasn't developed reincarnation magic yet, right? It was used on Perugius when he was a kid, but Lunaria-sama doesn't seem to be using it... So, I guess it wasn't invented yet?

- Back when Lunaria-sama died, there wasn't a need for it yet.

That's all.

Old Dragon's Tale + Author's Notes

March 1, 2017 (Wednesday) 16:58

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1656019/

Today's update has a lot of explanations, so it might be a bit harder to read.

Reader's Questions

Q: I'd like to read about Saint Milis as he doesn't give prophecies. I'm curious about the saint who was deceived by an evil god, but would that be a dark story too?

- Stories about people deceived by evil gods usually end in a bad ending.

Q: If it's going to be a dumb story, I'd like to see one about Chris and the Asuran nobles. So far, that girl is just there to balance out the number of kids.

- Villainous Young Lady Chris Greyrat... No, I actually want to write something a bit separate from the Mushoku Tensei world next.

Q: In Chapter 12, it says Laplace locked himself in his study to write a book. Could it be that Bloody Kant is actually Laplace?

- I'd prefer for Miss Bloody to just be a random traveler completely unrelated to the story...

Q: You mentioned that the Dragonfolk are really strong, but they're still not even able to scratch the Five Dragon Generals?

- In terms of racial strength, I imagine the ranking goes something like this:

Dragonfolk = Demons >> (Unsurpassable wall) >> Seafolk (in water) > Beastfolk ≧ Skyfolk > Seafolk (on land) >> (Unsurpassable wall) >> Humans

But if we're talking about intelligence, culture, technology, and evolution, then it's the complete opposite.

Q: Even Laplace is seen as if he was Yamcha... The "God" title is terrifying. Is the "President" weaker than his father, President Papa?

- President Papa is overwhelmingly stronger.

Q: At first, there was no such thing as a "Fighting God," right? But does that mean the "Fighting God Armor" was actually created to fight against other gods?

- That’s exactly what it means.

Old Dragon's Tale + Author's Notes

March 2, 2017 (Thursday) 18:16

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1656926/

Reader's Questions

Q: The format of your activity report titles changes every time, so I thought you were doing it on purpose. But this time, it stayed the same.

- Honestly, I'd prefer to keep them the same each time (but I don't really check to confirm).

Q: Are the current Seven Great Powers so weak that the gods of the Six-Faced World would treat them like children?

- Oh, absolutely.

Q: Wow, humans are really weak... But was that because back then, Sword God Style and King-tier magic hadn't been developed yet, so the difference was this big? Or was it that all the non-human races were absurdly strong in ancient times and have weakened by Rudeus' era? Also, racial strength aside, human top-tier fighters should be stronger than the weakest Dragonfolk, right? I mean, Rudeus at full power (with his armor) can probably reach Demon King level.

- Exactly, this is purely about racial strength.

Q: Wouldn't "civilization" be a better term than "culture" when talking about what humans excel at?

- Yes, that's the one.

Q: Could you check whether "焼き回し (yaki-mawashi)" is a correct expression? Maybe you meant "Rebaking" (焼き直し- yaki-naoshi) or "Reprinting" (焼き増し- yaki-mashi)?

- Apparently, "Reworking" (焼き回し- Yaki-mawashi) is a misused term. But it still feels closer to what I meant than "reheating" (焼き直し - Yaki naoshi), "making more copies" (焼き増し-Yakimashi), or "reusing" (使い回し-Tsukai-mawashi).

(Random historical note for fun)

During the Edo period, when Furuta Oribe praised a certain pottery style, other kilns started copying it, and that's supposedly how "Reheating" (焼き

回し - yaki-mawashi) came to be used for similar things appearing repeatedly...

Wouldn't it be cool if that were true?

Q: If the hierarchy goes:

President > Fighting God = Demon Dragon King Laplace,

Then does that mean the President, even as a reincarnated being, is stronger than the ancient Five Dragon Generals? Is it because he inherited divine blood? Or is it through sheer effort? Or both?

- Both. Plus, ingenuity and knowledge.

Q: I read the feedback responses, and honestly, I think these explanation-heavy parts help in understanding the world better, so you don't need to worry about them being harder to read.

- I really appreciate that. When I reread my own work, since I already know everything, it sometimes feels tedious...

Q: Since Dola-sama handles teleportation and summoning, does that mean there are Dragon Generals who aren't doing any work?

- There's this guy named Szilard who's basically a NEET. Well, technically, he's doing secret research behind the scenes.

Q: I was looking forward to battles with the Sea World and Celestial World, but... It ended in an instant. (´・ω・`) Aah! Damn you, Dragon God you Evil God!

- I considered dedicating one chapter to each of those worlds, but the content would have been repetitive, so I skipped it.

Q: Are Blessed Children like Zanoba also influenced by the "Power" that fills the world?

- Yep. At their core, Blessed Children aren't that different from monsters.

Old Dragon's Tale + Author's Notes

March 4, 2017 (Saturday) 01:38

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1658185/

Sorry for the delay, but here's the feedback response.

Reader's Questions

Q: One is a Tragic Prince, and the other is the Empress of Gluttony. This contrast is great.

- If only the prince had been a bit more easygoing, his life would've been so much better...

Q: His Majesty Badi and the Immortal Demon Kings all seem like really fun people.

- They're simple creatures, after all.

Q: There used to be Eight Great Demon Kings, but by Mushoku Tensei's era, there are only Five Great Demon Kings?

- Maybe there were originally eight, but someone decided to make it five just to go with an unlucky and ominous number.

Q: Thinking about it, the First Five Dragon Generals needed to gang up to take down one of the Eight Great Demon Kings, Necross Lacross. But then there's Hero Ars, who managed to defeat him solo... Isn't he absurdly strong? I guess it makes sense since he was considered the strongest human candidate.

- Even though he had the help of the Sages, yeah, he was crazy strong. But if I were to write his story from start to finish, I get the feeling he wouldn't seem all that powerful in the end...

Q: Does that mean the actual killer of Kishirisu is already dead? Did he kill Crystal? Was his death similar to Necrolia Nacrolia's?

- Honestly, it's questionable whether there even was an assassin among the Dragon Warriors. But if there was, he's probably dead by now...

Q: No matter the world, it's amazing how no one ever questions the fact that the Man-God is there.

- To them, Gods are absolute.

Q: There was a typo that made me go "Huh?" for a second and broke the flow of reading.

- My bad.

Q: I know it's late to ask, but how strong is Future Rudeus? If he can take down Emperor-class enemies, does that put him around the lower ranks of the Seven Great Powers?

- Yeah, about that level. But more importantly, he lost something far more valuable than strength...

Q: Will you ever write about the Human-Demon War?

- I want to! But I have no concrete plans yet!

Q: First time commenting! I noticed that the Dragonfolk are humanoid, yet they lay eggs. Are there any other egg-laying humanoid races?

- The Seafolk might be egg-layers too. They're called Seafolk, but after moving to the Human World, some settled in rivers instead. The ones who live in rivers eventually leave for the sea to work, then, after growing up, they return upstream — fighting off bears, dams, and other obstacles—to finally return home in glory.

Q: The technique that obliterates dragons in a flash — is it the same as the move the President used against the Magic Armor in Mushoku Tensei Chapter 162? You know, the one described as "light filled the entire vision"? Was that gravity? Photon energy? Or battle aura? Still a mystery...

- It's probably heat or light. Basically, a God's Beam attack.

Q: Now that I think about it, did Rudeus get teleported to the Demon Continent because of his mana reserves? Like, does the amount of mana determine teleportation distance? So, does that mean the teleportation disaster in Asura Kingdom and the ancient spirited away events from the intact Six-Faced World are actually the same phenomenon? But then again, the teleportation in the Asura Incident only happened within the same country, so maybe not...?

- It's pretty much the same thing. But the distance traveled isn't related to mana capacity. It's just that when the world's mana levels suddenly surge or drop, a balancing mechanism kicks in.

Q: If Maxwell created the Dragon Gates, then why does its chant sound like Perugius-sama introducing himself? (in Web Novel)

- The Dragon Gate Magic was created by Maxwell. The summoning by using a Dragon Gate was created by Perugius-sama. And it uses magic tools crafted by an ancient Dragon King, and when summoning them, of course he's going to show off.

Q: What I don't get is—why is the Great Demon Emperor so weak? Given how things are set up, shouldn't she be just as strong as the President, since he's the Dragon God's son and Kishirika Kishirisu is the Demon God's daughter right? At the very least, she should be stronger than the split-in-half Demon Dragon King, right?

- Not many people know this, but she actually has a hidden power. Believe it or not— She has the ability to grant others Demon Eyes! And that's not all— She also has the power to resurrect even after death! Honestly, isn't that enough to put her on the same level as the President?

Old Dragon's Tale + Author's Notes

March 4, 2017 (Saturday) 18:59

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1658663/

Reader's Questions

Q: When Rudeus tried to call himself "Dragon King," the President seriously stopped him. Was that because, historically, people who took that title got manipulated by the Man-God and turned against the Dragon God?

- It's definitely not a title with good history.

Q: At the end of the day, having guidance from the top is necessary, huh?

- Especially when people are about to do something really dumb or strange.

Q: The Man-God... seriously, that damn Man-God... I can't wait for the Subjugation of the Man-God Arc...

- I can't wait to write it either.

Q: I was expecting an epic battle scene, but I was an idiot for expecting that... Of course we're not getting it! This whole thing is a Man-God-related incident. The Five Dragon Generals wouldn't willingly fight the Dragon God.

- If this were an "epic battle" story where the Five Dragon Generals teamed up with the Dragon God to take down the Man-God, and lost in a glorious fight, then Laplace probably would've told it as a tale of past triumph instead of adding all this weird preamble.

Q: The original Dragon God and Orsted really do feel like father and son.

- A pair of socially awkward, quiet guys.

Q: At the very least, they could've just followed orders till the end...

- Yeah... If they had been dumb enough to follow even the most obviously bad orders, then maybe Laplace wouldn't have had to recall this story with so much regret...

Old Dragon's Tale + Author's Notes

March 6, 2017 (Monday) 16:15

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1660411/

With today's update, the story is complete.

I've combined the feedback responses for yesterday and today.

Also, today is my manuscript deadline.

Reader's Questions

Q: Are all the Five Dragon Generals around the upper ranks of the Seven Great Powers in strength?

- Actually, Laplace is the weakest of the bunch...

Q: I can't believe that Laputa knockoff had such a backstory... So it was only half-complete, huh, Chaos-san? It's like a certain sky island from a certain Piece series. Can I just imagine it like that when I read the next volume?

- You don't need my permission to imagine things.

Q: Is there a chance that Pe-sama (Perugius) could reach the upper tiers in strength if he transforms into a dragon?

- Apparently, Pe-sama has some kind of secret technique specifically for dealing with Laplace... I wonder what kind of move it is...

Q: If they had just all fought the Man-God together, they could've won...

- Methodically stripping away the opponent's chances of winning— That's a classic strategy for victory.

Q: If the President dumped all his stat points into combat ability, does that mean Kishirika-sama put hers into support skills and abilities?

- Pretty much. The President is overall superior in every parameter, except when it comes to communication skills... (let's just leave it at that).

Q: Will you ever explain why the Man-God became so rotten?

- I considered starting from that point, but I decided to hold off on it this time. I'll probably cover it in the Man-God Subjugation Arc (tentative title).

Q: In Mushoku Tensei, the Man-God acts like he doesn't understand why Orsted hates him. But could it be that the early version of the Man-God in Ancient Dragon is slightly different from the one in Mushoku Tensei?

- The truly awful people never think they're doing anything wrong. They assume that whatever they do is justified, so they can't even fathom being resented for it... That aside, in Mushoku Tensei, that line was just a blatant lie. "Huh? Why does he hate me? I have no clue at all! Nope, not even a little! (lol)"

Q: Now that I think about it, even though Kishirika is the Demon God's daughter, she doesn't get much respect.

- By the time of Mushoku Tensei, after two major wars, a lot of generational shifts had taken place.

Q: Was it Laplace who passed down knowledge about the floating fortress and the Dragon Gates to Perugius?

- I'd like to write about that at some point... But yeah, most of Perugius' knowledge comes from books Laplace left behind.

Q: If killing the Man-God = the destruction of the Human World, does the President still intend to kill him? Does he have some alternative method in mind?

- Hate to break it to you, but that outcome isn't actually confirmed. (?)

Q: Wait, so Maxwell and Kháos didn't reincarnate?

- Seems like they didn't. The reincarnation technique requires the power of the God Gems, so only Perugius and Orsted had access to it.

Q: Now that I think about it, Laplace wasn't actually one of the original Five Dragon Generals, was he?

- Strictly speaking, yeah!

Q: I'm not Rudeus, but I just can't bring myself to fully hate the Man-God. He's an annoying bastard, but he's a great character. He's got vulnerabilities, but they aren't outright stupidity. His strength is questionable, and his mental state seems incredibly fragile...

- Compared to the other gods, he's much closer to being human. The other gods won't hesitate to throw their lives away, but the Man-God is utterly terrified of dying.

Q: The Dragon God's God Gem was destroyed, and the Man-God is still around, so that means four God Gems remain. Is the missing one the Demon God's? Did Laplace just, uh... borrow it indefinitely?

- Dola-sama used one to reincarnate Perugius, so that reduced the count.

Q: But seriously, Szilard dying as an "apology"... that's not really a great apology, is it?

- He was simply following through on his own words.

Q: After suffering through all that, after tens of thousands of years later, Laplace still ends up having the Fighting God Armor, an extremely dangerous artifact, stolen right out from under him... By Badigadi, of all people, someone who sticks out like a sore thumb anywhere.

- Back in the Second Human-Demon War, Badigadi must have looked like a proper Demon King of Wisdom — Two arms, not overly muscular, slim, glasses, totally intellectual vibes. And then something happened that turned him into a six-armed, muscle-bound, freakish pervert... Demon's secrets... or maybe just excessive weight training...

Q: So, the Five Dragon Generals' treasures weren't actually created by the First Dragon God?

- Yeah, that's about right.

Q: "The accumulated wisdom and refinement of the Five Dragon Generals"— But did Laplace actually contribute anything? Seems more like "the wisdom and refinement of the Four Dragon Generals + a glorified errand boy."

- When Laplace refers to the Five Dragon Generals, he's talking about the other five, not himself. It's like an idol group he admired...

Q: Is the Man-God from Ancient Dragon and the one from Mushoku Tensei the same person?

- There aren't two of that bastard...

Q: So the President doesn't actually have a curse, but rather, his presence is genetically imprinted with the Dragon God's intimidation factor? And that's why those close to the Dragon God instinctively fear him? Is that why people from other worlds are fine around him?

- Yeah, more or less. That's why he's feared and hated.

That's all.

Old Dragon's Tale – Author's Notes & Afterword

March 8, 2017 (Wednesday) 01:34

https://mypage.syosetu.com/mypageblog/view/userid/288399/blogkey/1661764/

And with that, Old Dragon's Tale is complete.

This one was particularly difficult to write.

Partly because I was busy with my work on the published books and couldn't find enough time, but also because it was just plain tough to write.

I had three separate files labeled "plot" and about six folders full of scrapped drafts... In the end, it took around six months.

Before publishing, I even thought, Maybe I should let this sit for another three months? But in the end, there are things you just don't notice or learn unless you let people read it. Once again, I've gained a lot of experience thanks to all of you.

Thank you for reading.

There are probably some contradictions with what's written in Mushoku Tensei, but I'd appreciate it if you could just use your imagination and interpret things loosely. I'll fix the typos in one go at some point.

I'll be busy again for a while, so my next work won't be coming anytime soon. That said, I'll still be posting updates and promotional info about the published books here, so I appreciate your understanding.

Reader's Questions

Q: The Man-God, as his name suggests, is basically a condensed version of human strengths, huh? He schemes, he plots, and he has the cunning to bring down opponents far stronger than himself. In a way, he's similar to Rudeus.

- Exactly. While the other gods are portrayed as lofty and aloof, I've deliberately written the Man-God to feel as human as possible.

Q: Will Perugius have a bigger role in the future? It's sad seeing him portrayed as nothing more than a fool. Also, what does he think of the tragic history of the Dragonfolk? ...Or does he not even know?

- He probably doesn't know. And even if he did, he wouldn't really grasp the weight of it.

Q: Congratulations on completing the story!

- Thank you. Another work successfully completed.

Q: A lot of things became clearer in Old Dragon's Tale! So the Laplace War will be covered in a separate story, huh?

- Yep, that'll be a different story.

Q: I'll continue to support all of your works! Take as much time as you need—just make sure to write everything you want with no regrets!

- Thank you. That's exactly what I intend to do.

Q: Are there any Dragonfolk survivors from the era of the First Dragon God still around in Mushoku Tensei's time? If not, I feel like some Dragonfolk would have ended up hating the Dragon God instead of the Man-God, since they were cursed but didn't know the whole story...

- "There's no way any Dragonfolk would hate the Dragon God!"

...I'd like to say that but, well, actually, yeah. There probably are some...

Q: Is the Five Dragon Generals' position hereditary?

- No, it's an appointed position.

Q: Before becoming the Demon God, Laplace seems to have left behind a ridiculous amount of knowledge and artifacts for Orsted. But how much of it has Orsted actually managed to recover?

- Considering that he's made it all the way to the Man-God at least once, he's probably recovered most of it. Of course, there are probably things he didn't notice or deemed useless.

Q: "The descendants of the Five Dragon Generals were given sacred treasures made from fragments of the fallen Dragon God's God Gem." If Laplace hadn't done that, the President wouldn't have had to bear such a burden...

- Yeah, it would've spared him the mental strain... But at the cost of completely screwing him over.

Q: I have a question— If Laplace was the 2nd Dragon God and the President is the 100th, does that mean there were 97 Dragon Gods in between?

- Laplace trained and passed down techniques to promising warriors from the Human and Dragonfolk bloodlines, and those who inherited them would call themselves "Dragon God."

Laplace would then observe them until their deaths, collect battle data, and pass on the techniques to the next candidate. He repeated this process over and over.

To ensure the research continued even after his unexpected death, he turned it into a formal fighting style "school". Since there were often multiple successors in one generation, there were probably over 100 Dragon Gods in total.

Q: I'm really interested in the President's looping story. Just imagining him reading Laplace's records for the first time, or the overwhelming despair of not knowing how many more loops it will take, gives me chills.

- Just thinking about writing hundreds of loops leading up to him learning his own name... I don't think I have the stamina or mental fortitude for that right now.

Q: Looking at everything, it really feels like Rudeus is a crucial figure, but not the protagonist of this world's story. The real protagonists are the President, Rudeus' descendants, and that more-than-friends, less-than-lovers friend of Nanahoshi who's yet to appear.

- Rudeus is the protagonist of his story. The President is the protagonist of his story.

Q: If you revealed why the Man-God became corrupt now, wouldn't it weaken the catharsis of the Man-God Subjugation Arc later?

- That's part of it, but more than that, Old Dragon's Tale was meant to focus on the pride and feelings of the Dragonfolk. So adding that explanation here would have just been a distraction.

Q: Would you consider compiling all the Six-Faced World stories into a single series list?

- Good idea. I've put it together.

That's all.

Thank you.

TALES FROM THE SIX FACED WORLD
OLD DRAGON'S TALE

Mushoku Tensei References

Excerpts from the Light Novel

Since the 7 Seas translation contains many errors and they chose to make "stylistic changes" that alter the context of references—sometimes to the point of losing references to the Old Dragon's Tale story—I have decided to create this section where I will include only excerpts of those references, translated directly from the Japanese Light Novel. This way, you will have an index to review those references, all centralized in this book.

It should be noted that the questions posed earlier are relevant to the Web Novel version. The following excerpts, however, come from the more refined and updated version of Mushoku Tensei, which integrates better with the Old Dragon's Tale story. As a result, some of the previously mentioned questions and answers may no longer be as relevant.

As a final note, **these translations from this point forward are done 100% with the goal of clarity rather than "style."** The idea is to highlight details that have been lost in other translations.

The Tale

The Day Aisha Stopped Being a Maid
Redundancy – Web Novel – Deleted Episode – Chapter 1

Once upon a time, there was a boy named Ars.

From a young age, he was strong-willed and physically powerful.

By the time Ars became aware of his surroundings, his parents had already passed away. The village where Ars lived was far from the town, and even within the village, his family was particularly poor.

But even so, Ars was happy.

He had a wise and dependable older brother, and the villagers were kind to them despite being orphans. Ars was genuinely grateful for this and worked tirelessly every day. Fortunately, he was strong, so there was no shortage of work he could do.

On top of that, he had a girl he loved.

She was frail, often bedridden, and was said to not have much time left to live. Every day, after finishing work, Ars would visit her window and talk with her for a short while before heading home. That time was precious to him, an irreplaceable part of his life.

She wouldn’t live long.

Yet there was nothing Ars could do about it. Besides, she seemed to understand that her time was limited. She never made selfish demands; she simply looked forward to talking with Ars each day. Ars thought: "I will probably continue living like this until the day she dies."

But then, one day...As she lay in bed, she gazed at the sky. The eerie sky, painted in an unnatural shade of purple.

"Hey, Ars, did you know? Before the Demon King appeared, the sky used to be a beautiful blue."

Ars had heard about that before. The Demon King had been alive since long before Ars was born. One day, the Demon King built an army and invaded the human world. By the time the Demon King had conquered nearly half the world, on a whim, she changed the color of the sky.

"Before I die, I’d love to see a beautiful blue sky just once."

That was what she said.

It was the first time Ars had ever heard her make a "selfish" request. No, perhaps it wasn’t even enough to be called selfish. Maybe it was just a fleeting wish, a dream she knew could never come true. Ars understood that. It was just a story—she wasn’t actually asking him to do anything.

Yet, as she spoke, her expression was so delicate, so resigned. She had already given up on the idea, convinced it was impossible. That was why Ars made up his mind.

He would show her a blue sky.

However, Ars was just a villager, albeit a strong one. He had no knowledge, no wisdom. He had no idea how to turn the sky blue again.

"Big Brother, I want to restore the sky’s color to blue. How can I do that?"

So, he asked his older brother.

His brother, who was much older, had attended a small but adequate school back when their parents were still alive. Whenever Ars had a problem, he would turn to his brother for advice.

"Hmm..."

His brother pondered over Ars' question. It was a difficult one, even for him. After a long pause, he finally spoke.

"The Demon King turned the sky purple. So, if the Demon King is defeated, the sky should return to normal."

Hearing this, Ars resolved to go and defeat the Demon King. Without hesitation, he began preparing for his journey. Seeing this, his brother panicked and spoke up.

"Ars, the Demon King is a terrifying being. If you even get close, she'll tear you apart in an instant."

"But even so, I'm going anyway."

Ars' unwavering determination left his brother speechless.

Once Ars had made up his mind, nothing anyone said could change it.

"But you can't simply walk aimlessly without a plan and reach the Demon King. First, head to the largest city in the kingdom. I'll draw you a map. Also, take some food and a new pair of shoes for the journey."

His brother prepared as much as he could for his journey. He knew his stubborn little brother wouldn't give up. Yet the Demon King was overwhelmingly powerful. He wouldn't return alive. This was a journey to the afterlife. But at the very least, his brother wanted him to survive as long as possible.

And so, Ars set out on his journey.

With a map in hand, wearing new shoes, and carrying the dagger their father had left behind in his waist...

Leaving behind the one he loved in the village...

Through fields and over mountains, Ars traveled to the largest city in the kingdom. For the first time in his life, he saw a grand castle. For the first time, he saw bustling crowds of people. As he took it all in, he thought to himself: "Surely, someone here will know."

"If you want to defeat the Demon King, you should go to the castle. Right now, they'll welcome anyone willing to fight."

Someone told him that.

Following their advice, Ars made his way to the castle.

It was the largest building he had ever seen.

"I want to defeat the Demon King."

When he spoke these words at the entrance, he was granted an audience with the king. The king, sitting on a dull-colored throne, was greeting each visitor one by one.

But when it was Ars' turn, he reacted with exaggerated surprise.

"Why, you're just a child!"

"I may be a child, but I want to defeat the Demon King. Please tell me where she is."

"A mere child like you? What could you possibly do? Go home."

A knight standing nearby spoke up as well.

"Fighting is the duty of adults. We are here to protect children like you."

Everyone else in the hall echoed the same sentiment.

"You're just a child."

"You shouldn't be fighting."

"Go home."

No matter how strongly Ars shouted, "I want to defeat the Demon King!" no one took him seriously.

However, the royal fortune-teller said something different.

"Seek out the Five Sages. They will surely aid you. But whatever you do, NEVER challenge the Demon King without meeting all five of them first."

Taking those words to heart, Ars set out once more on his journey so he could find the Five Sages.

A long, long journey.

Ars continued his travels.

He had no destination in mind.

But he believed with all his heart that if he searched for them, he would find them.

He walked, asking everyone he met about the Five Sages, and then walked some more.

And then, at last, he found one.

Beyond the plains, across a great river, in a cave—Ars discovered the First Sage.

A sage with fragile, ephemeral eyes and green-silver hair. Scattered around him were shields that shimmered in the same hues as his hair.

"Hello, Sage."

"Hello, child of man."

"My name is Ars."

"My name is Szilard, the Second Sage. I live only for my convictions."

"Truth is, I have to defeat the Demon King. Will you lend me your strength?"

"I am sorry, but I am very busy. Very, very busy."

"What are you doing?"

"I am crafting shields for the children of the distant future with the hopes they protect them. I'm sure that one day, the flames of danger will surely fall upon them."

The sage said this, then looked at Ars and asked:

"Let me ask you, child of man. Why do you seek to defeat the Demon King?"

"I want to see a blue sky. For the sake of someone precious to me."

"Ah, you have convictions as well. Then I shall lend you my shield. It will surely protect you."

"Thank you, Sage."

Receiving the shield from the sage, Ars continued his journey.

He had no destination in mind.

But he believed with all his heart that if he searched for them, he would find them.

He walked, asking everyone he met about the Five Sages, and then walked some more.

And then, he found one.

The Second Sage was at the northernmost edge.

A sage with sharp eyes and white-silver hair. In the cold, cold forest of snow, she was building a massive ship.

"Hello, Sage."

"Hello, child of man."

"My name is Ars."

"My name is Dola, the Third Sage. I live only for loyalty."

"Truth is, I have to defeat the Demon King. Will you lend me your strength?"

"I am sorry, but I am very busy. Very, very busy."

"What are you doing?"

"I am building a ship for the children of the distant future. Someday, they will surely need to journey far away."

The sage said this, then looked at Ars and asked:

"Let me ask you too, child of man. Why do you seek to defeat the Demon King?"

"I want to see a blue sky. For the sake of someone precious to me."

"Ah, so you carry loyalty in your heart as well. Then I shall lend you my ship. The Demon King resides far away, after all."

Receiving the ship from the sage, Ars continued his journey.

He had no destination in mind.

But he believed with all his heart that if he searched, he would find them.

He walked, and at times, sailed, asking everyone he met about the Five Sages, and then walked some more.

And then, he found one.

The third sage was deep within the mountains.

A sage with deep eyes and black-silver hair.

Wielding a massive hammer, he stood before an anvil, forging steel.

"Hello, Sage."

"Hello, child of man."

"My name is Ars."

"My name is Kháos, the Fourth Sage. I live only for the quest."

"Truth is, I have to defeat the Demon King. Will you lend me your strength?"

"I am sorry, but I am very busy. Very, very busy."

"What are you doing?"

"I am forging swords for the children of the distant future. I want those children to survive."

The sage said this, then looked at Ars and asked:

"Let me ask you too, child of man. Why do you seek to defeat the Demon King?"

"I want to see a blue sky. For the sake of someone precious to me."

"Ah, so you're also on a quest. Then I shall lend you my sword. With it, you can cut down even the Demon King."

Receiving the sword from the sage, Ars continued his journey.

He had no destination in mind.

But he believed with all his heart that if he searched for them, he would find them.

He walked, and at times, fought off monsters with his sword. He asked everyone he met about the Five Sages, and walked again.

And then, he found one.

The fourth sage was on an island in the middle of the sea.

A sage with strong eyes and blue-silver hair. He was crafting bracelets from large pieces of leather.

"Hello, Sage."

"Hello, child of man."

"My name is Ars."

"My name is Maxwell, the Fifth Sage. I live only for love."

"Truth is, I have to defeat the Demon King. Will you lend me your strength?"

"I am sorry, but I am very busy. Very, very busy."

"What are you doing?"

"I am crafting bracelets to ward off evil for the children of the distant future. Someday, they will surely be approached by evil beings."

The sage said this, then looked at Ars and asked:

"Let me ask you too, child of man. Why do you seek to defeat the Demon King?"

"I want to see a blue sky. For the sake of someone precious to me."

"Ah, you know love as well. Then I shall lend you my shining bracelet. Use it to ward off evil."

Ars had now met four sages.

And still, he continued his journey.

But the last sage was nowhere to be found. No one knew where he was, no one even knew his name.

Gradually, Ars began to wonder: "Perhaps the last sage doesn’t exist."

The first sage he met had introduced himself as the second sage. Which meant... perhaps he would never meet the first sage. But even so, he kept searching. Ars desperately sought the last sage. Yet, no matter how hard he searched, he could not find him. He never met the final sage.

But Ars now had a sword, a shield, and a bracelet. And at his feet was the ship that would take him to the Demon King. Looking at them, Ars thought:

"With all of this, maybe I can defeat the Demon King!"

Oh, how tragic it was.

Ars, having failed to meet the Five Sages, set off to face the Demon King.

Yes, he had forgotten what the fortune-teller had told him from the very beginning.

The Demon King's lair was a truly terrifying place.

It was surrounded by a poisonous swamp, impossible to cross by normal means. Even if one managed to traverse it, the land was teeming with enormous, savage monsters the likes of which no one had ever seen, and devils who lured people into corruption. But thanks to the ship, Ars easily crossed the poisonous swamp.

When monsters attacked, he had his sword and shield. The shield was sturdy beyond compare—no claw or fang from the monsters could touch Ars. The sword was sharp beyond measure—a single stroke was enough to cleave any monster in two. Occasionally, devils whispered to him:

"With that sword, shield, and ship, you could become the king of all mankind." But Ars never heard them. The protective bracelet warded off their voices. And so, Ars reached the Demon King's lair.

The Demon King resided in a massive, ominous black castle, far greater than any human fortress.

"FWAHAHAHAHA! You have done well to come all this way, child of man! What business do you have with me!?"

The Demon King was a monstrous being with a massive body, a wide mouth, and terrifying purple hair.

"I want you to return the sky to its original color. For the sake of someone precious to me."

"That is impossible! I love the purple sky! Fwahahahaha!"

The Demon King would not listen. The Demon King did not understand the meaning of "someone precious."

"Then I'll defeat you and restore the sky to its original color!"

Ars challenged the Demon King to battle. With his sword, shield, and bracelet in hand, he charged forward with full confidence.

However, the movements of the Demon King were incredibly fast! It was as if she could see the future—dodging every swing of Ars' sword with ease. No matter how much Ars swung, his attacks never even grazed her.

"Fwahahaha! You can't hit me! Not even close! Now it's my turn!"

Laughing, the Demon King lunged at Ars. Ars raised his shield to block the massive fist.

"Agh!"

But—what a disaster. In the next instant, the Demon King grabbed Ars' shield, swung him around, and sent him flying. Crashing hard against the wall, Ars was overwhelmed with fear. The sword and shield given to him by the sages were useless against the Demon King.

"Fwahaha! I'll crush you and eat you whole! I'll chew you up, bones and all!"

The monstrous Demon King loomed closer. Unable to bear it, Ars turned and ran. No matter how strong-willed he was, he had never experienced such fear in his life—he could no longer fight. He abandoned his sword and shield, and at some point, even his bracelet slipped off.

By the time he had escaped the Demon King, he had nothing left.

Ars wandered aimlessly through the Demon King's land. The poisonous miasma from the swamps slowly ate away at his body. But it wasn't the miasma that truly corroded him; it was a different kind of poison.

"I ran away... Even though someone precious is waiting for me."

The name of that poison was called "despair."

Ars hung his head and walked on, lost in misery. Even with a sword and shield, he couldn't defeat the Demon King. Tears streamed down his face, staining the ground. Without his bracelet, the wicked devils that fed on sorrow began to gather. Licking away Ars' falling tears, one of them whispered in his ear.

"Hello, little hero. What's wrong? You are shedding such delicious tears."

"I can't defeat the Demon King."

"Of course not. The Demon King is far too strong. Besides, you're just a small child."

"I just want to bring back the blue sky."

"That's impossible. After all, you're powerless, just a child."

"Then... what should I do?"

"You can't do anything. You won't grow stronger, and you won't gain power. There's nothing you can do."

Taking the devil’s whispers as true, Ars became consumed by despair and walked toward the edge of the poisonous swamp. He thought, maybe I should just throw myself in. If he did, his small body would melt away in an instant. There was nothing else he could do. Closing his eyes, Ars prepared to leap into the swamp.

But at the last moment, he spotted something strange at the edge of the swamp—a peculiar house. It looked like a turtle’s shell placed over a hole, an odd little dwelling.

"What is that? Hey, devil, do you know something about that house—?"

When he turned to ask, the devil had vanished. No matter where he looked, it was gone. Before he realized it, a sacred aura filled the surroundings. The aura seemed to be radiating from that house.

"Then... that must be the home of a holy being."

With that thought, Ars gathered some courage and cautiously stepped inside.

"Excuse me..."

"Hello, child of man. What brings you here? This is no place for a human child."

Inside was a person with gentle eyes and red-silver hair.

"My name is Ars. I wanted to restore the sky’s color, but I lost to the Demon King."

"I am the one who has discarded his name. The one who has no fixed place. The first and last sage. I live only for my mission."

Hearing those words, Ars remembered. He was supposed to meet Five Sages. He was not supposed to fight the Demon King without meeting them all. As the realization struck him, a strange sense of courage welled up inside him. He wasn't completely powerless. He had simply made a mistake.

"I am Ars. Final sage, please... lend me your strength to defeat the Demon King!"

"I am very busy. Very, very busy."

"What are you doing?"

"I am gathering power for the children of the distant future. For there will come a day when they must defeat their own great enemy."

The sage then looked at Ars and asked:

"Let me ask you, child of man. Why do you seek to defeat the Demon King?"

"I want to see a blue sky. For the sake of someone precious to me."

"Ah, so you have a mission of your own. But tell me, will fulfilling that wish truly be for your loved one's sake?"

"Of course! She wants to see the blue sky!"

"I see... Then I shall grant you a little part of my power. Use it to defeat the Demon King."

Thus, Ars received power from the first and final sage. To the sage, it was just a small fraction of his power, yet for Ars, it was overwhelming. With this newfound strength, Ars learned the true way to wield his sword and shield. He learned how to unleash the full brilliance of his bracelet. And he learned how to make his ship fly through the sky.

Riding his flying ship, Ars set off once more—toward the Demon King's castle. Picking up the bracelet that had fallen in front of the castle, Ars watched as it shone with a brilliant light. And, as if responding to that radiance, the sword and shield returned to his hands.

"FWAHAHAHA! The child has come back! This time, I'll devour you whole! I love delicious food!"

The second battle against the Demon King had begun. But this time, Ars had gained power. When he swung his sword, it slashed through the Demon King. When he raised his shield, it deflected the Demon King's attacks. Now that Ars possessed overwhelming strength, the Demon King was no longer a match for him.

"Ughyaa!"

At last, the Demon King was pierced by Ars' sword, letting out a final cry before perishing. Then, a rainbow-colored light burst forth from the Demon King's body. As if responding to it, the sky began to quickly change.

When Ars looked up, there it was—a vast, clear blue sky! The very thing he had wished for, the very thing his beloved had longed to see. Ars wanted to return to his loved one immediately. But he couldn't—not yet. First, he had to return what he had borrowed.

First, he went to the first and final sage and returned the power.

Next, he visited the fifth sage and returned the bracelet.

Then, he went to the fourth sage and returned the sword.

After that, he visited the third sage and returned the flying ship.

Finally, he went to the second sage and returned the shield.

Having returned everything, he had borrowed; Ars made his way back to the grand city—the city of mankind. A grand festival was being held there.

Seeing the sky restored, the people knew the Demon King had been defeated.

When Ars reached the castle, the king raised his arms in celebration.

"Oh, brave hero Ars! You have returned! You have defeated the Demon King! I shall give you this kingdom, and my beloved daughter as well—please, become our king!"

Despite the King's pleas, Ars declined. He said that someone precious was waiting for him. Still, he made sure to thank the fortune-teller and spent one day in the city before returning home. After that, Ars finally returned to his village. It had been a long journey since he left. But he had done it—he had brought back the blue sky.

Now, he wanted to show it to her. He wanted to see her smile.

However, when he arrived at the village, his older brother was waiting for him with a sorrowful expression, his head hung low.

"Brother, lift your head. Look! The sky is blue! I defeated the Demon King and brought it back!"

But even then, the sad look in his brother did not change.

"I need to show my loved one too! She'll be happy to see the blue sky!"

When listening to these words, his brother's face only grew sadder.

And then, Ars finally asked.

"Brother... Why do you look so sad?"

"My dear brother. Oh... my dear brother. Listen carefully... it's because... she has died."

"Who has died?"

"Your loved one. She passed away this morning."

Hearing that, Ars smiled.

He smiled despite the loneliness, despite the sorrow.

"This morning? Then it's okay. She must have seen the blue sky before she passed. She must have smiled at the sight of it, right?"

"No... she cried. She wept because she couldn't see you. Even when the sky turned a brilliant blue, she didn't care—she only wanted to see you. She hung her head low and cried, wishing to see you and longing for you until the very end."

Hearing those words, Ars froze in shock.

He had thought he had granted the wish of his loved one.

But he was wrong.

Her true wish was simply to be with him. She just wanted to treasure the little time they had together.

Even if just for a little while longer, until the very end.

That was her real wish.

"...Ah..."

Before his brother, Ars collapsed to his knees.

A single tear fell from his now lifeless eyes. And then another.

Ars cried.

And he continued crying, endlessly.

Because it was too late.

Because there was nothing he could do.

Because he had made the worst mistake:

He misunderstood what mattered the most.

He cried, and cried... until the day he died——.

★ ★ ★

"Alright, that's the end."

With a snap, Aisha closed the book.

"....."

"Hmm, that story ended on a dark note〜. I guess the lesson is that happiness is actually much closer than you think. But personally, I prefer happy endings〜."

Sitting on Aisha's lap was little Ars, he stared at the book's cover. Not the Ars from the story—but the eldest son of the Greyrat family.

"If this was set during the First Human-Demon War, then... I guess it's an adaptation of the legend of the hero Ars? It's a little different from the version I know. There are no companions, and there's an extra sage... but I guess that's just creative liberty in an adaptation."

As Aisha said this, she spun the book in her hands, examining it.

It was an old book.

Probably older than any other book in the Greyrat household.

The cover was bound in white leather, but even Aisha couldn't tell what kind of leather it was.

Still, the color seemed oddly familiar and she felt she had seen it before.

And despite the long passage of time, not a single crack had formed on the cover—Though the pages inside were tattered. If this book really was

written right after the First Human-Demon War, then even the paper had to be quite durable.

Its title: "The Tale of Ars." Not very elaborate or creative.

"Ars, you wanted me to read this, so I did, but... where did you even find this book? It's written in the Fighting God language."

"From Lord Orsted's house."

"Eh? ... you didn't take it without asking, did you? That's bad, you know!"

"N-no! When I went to visit with Papa, I saw it on the bookshelf and got curious, so I flipped through it... and Lord Orsted just said, 'You can take it with you'..."

Even as he explained, Ars looked unusually gloomy. It was as if...as if he had experienced the same thing himself. The story had a terribly tragic ending. Because the protagonist was also named Ars, Aisha had put extra effort into reading it in a way that would immerse him.

Perhaps because of that, Ars had identified with the story too much.

"It's okay, you know? You will definitely be happy, Ars."

Aisha hugged Ars and ruffled his hair. When he was younger, this was enough to cheer him up every time. But those days were fading. Ever since he turned ten, Ars was becoming harder to fool. Even now, his expression remained dark.

"Hey, Aisha."

"What is it?"

Ars turned to her and asked her this.

"In the story... what do you think Ars could have done to be happy?"

"Hmm? Well... If he stayed with her, she would have died anyway. So, I guess instead of chasing after the Demon King, he should've asked the Five Sages how to save her... then married her, and lived happily ever after. I mean, even if the Demon King—well, Lady Kishirika in this case—wasn't defeated, the humans wouldn't have been eradicated in just a few years. The two of them could've at least lived happily for the rest of their lives together."

Aisha nodded, satisfied with her answer thinking it was a perfect one.

The Reason for Trust

Volume 3 - Chapter 4

“No matter how bad their reputation is, the fact that the Superd tribe are terrifying is still…”

“Wrong! That is not true!”

Ruijerd grabbed me by the collar. He was looking at me with an incredibly frightening expression. I was starting to tremble. Oh no…

“That was Laplace’s scheme! The Superds are not a terrifying!”

W-what? What’s going on? Stop, this is scary. My body won’t stop shaking. Wait, a scheme? Is this a conspiracy theory? Laplace lived five hundred years ago, right?

“What… what did Laplace do?”

“He betrayed our loyalty!”

His grip weakened. I patted his arm, and he let go of my collar.

“He… He…!”

But his hands were still trembling.

“Can you tell me the full story?”

“It’s a long one.”

“I don’t mind.”

What Ruijerd told me next was a story hidden behind history, a story that could be considered the other side of history.

★ ★ ★

The Demon God Laplace. He was the hero who united the demons and secured their rights from humanity.

The Superds were among the earliest to join Laplace’s forces. With their exceptional agility, formidable detection abilities, and outstanding combat skills, they became one of Laplace’s elite guard units, specializing in ambushes and night raids. Their third eye on their forehead functioned like a radar, making it so they were never caught off guard and always executed successful surprise attacks. They were an elite force.

On the Demon Continent at that time, the name “Superd” was spoken with both fear and respect. Midway through the Laplace War—around the time the invasion of the Central Continent began—Laplace visited the Superd warriors carrying a special spear.

The weapon Laplace brought would later be known as the "Devil’s Spear."[24] Laplace bestowed this spear upon the warriors. It resembled the tridents traditionally used by the Superds, but its black, ominous appearance made it clear that it was a magic spear.

Naturally, some within the warriors opposed it. "Our spears are our souls. We cannot abandon them for something like this," they said. But it was a gift from their master, Laplace. In the end, their leader, Ruijerd, forced everyone to adopt the new weapon. Believing it was a way to prove their loyalty to Laplace.

“Hm? Leader?”

“Yes, I was the leader of the Superd warriors.”

“...How old are you now?”

“I stopped counting after five hundred.”

“Oh... I see...”

Right, the Superds were long-lived. That was mentioned in Roxy’s dictionary. Well, moving on. The Superd warriors planted their original spears into the ground in one place and continued to fight using the Devil Spears. The Devil Spears granted them tremendous power. They enhanced physical abilities several times over, nullified the magic used by humans, sharpened their senses, and gave them an overwhelming sense of invincibility. As a result, the Superds gradually transformed into what would be called ‘Devils’.

The more blood the Devil Spears absorbed, the more they tainted the souls of their wielders. No one questioned it. Everyone was experiencing the same gradual mental erosion, so no one noticed the changes in themselves or those around them.

Then, tragedy struck.

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[24] The name used for the spear and the Superds later is “Akuma” (悪魔) or “Evil Demon”, which translates better to Devil.

At some point, the warriors lost the ability to distinguish between friend and foe, attacking indiscriminately. Regardless of age or sex, even children, they showed no mercy, slaughtering all in their path.

Ruijerd said he remembers that time vividly. Before long, the demons began saying “the Superds are traitors”, and humans referred to them as “merciless, bloodthirsty devils”.

Back then, Ruijerd and his warriors listened to these rumors with twisted delight. They believed it to be their "honor." Amidst a world full of enemies, the Superds wielding the Devil Spears were unmatched. They became an unstoppable force, feared by all. But they weren’t without casualties. Being attacked by both humans and demons alike, they fought day and night, slowly dwindling in numbers one by one.

Yet no one questioned it. They were intoxicated by the idea that dying in battle was the highest honor. Then, one day, a rumor spread—a Superd settlement was under attack.

It was Ruijerd’s hometown.

It was a trap designed to lure the Superds in, but there was no one left in the warriors capable of rational thought. The Superd warriors returned home for the first time in a long while—only to attack their own village.

There were people,[25] so he had to kill them. That was all there was to it. Ruijerd killed his parents, killed his wife, killed his sisters, and finally, he stabbed and killed his own son. Even though he was still a child, he had trained hard to become a Superd warrior. It was not what one would call a fierce battle, but in the end, the child broke the Devil Spear.

In that moment, the pleasant dream ended.

And at the same time, the nightmare began.

Something hard and crunchy was in Ruijerd’s mouth. When he realized it was his son’s finger, he vomited. His first thought was to kill himself, but he immediately rejected the idea. There was something he had to do first. Even if he were to die, there was still an enemy he had to bite to death.

At that moment, the Superd settlement was surrounded by a demon subjugation force. The warriors had been reduced to just ten.

The warriors, which had once numbered nearly two hundred when they wielded the Devil Spears, those brave and fearless warriors, were now down to ten. Ten battered survivors. Some had lost an arm, some an eye, others

[25] This “People” is “Hito”.

had their forehead gemstones shattered. Yet, despite their wounds, they glared at the nearly one thousand strong subjugation force with battle-hungry expressions.

Ruijerd realized they would all die in vain. The first thing he did was break all of his comrades' Devil Spears. One by one, they came to their senses, staring in shock. Some wailed in grief over the family they had slain. Some wept bitter, uncontrollable tears.

But none of them said, "Let me keep dreaming." There was not a single weak-willed person among them. Every one of them swore vengeance against Laplace. Not a single one blamed Ruijerd.

They were no longer devils.

Nor were they warriors who could take pride in anything.

They were simply filthy, wretched beings consumed by revenge.

What became of those ten, Ruijerd did not know. He assumed they did not survive. Without the Devil Spears, the Superds were nothing more than slightly stronger warriors. And having lost their own well-worn spears, there was no way they could survive battle using unfamiliar weapons.

Yet Ruijerd broke through the encirclement.

He escaped, barely clinging to life. For three days and nights, he wandered the brink of death. The only thing Ruijerd carried with him that survived from all that, was his son's spear. His son had broken the Devil Spear and, with his own soul-bound spear, protected Ruijerd.

And then... after years of hiding, he finally took his revenge. He intervened in the battle between the Three Demon God Slaying Heroes and Laplace, successfully landing a decisive blow.

But even with Laplace's defeat, not everything would go back to normal. The Superds were still persecuted, and settlements other than the one they had destroyed with their own hands were also attacked and scattered. To help them escape, Ruijerd had to kill more demons.

The persecution of the Superds after the war was extreme and so, Ruijerd's retaliation was just as fierce. For nearly three hundred years now, Ruijerd had not met another Superd on the Demon Continent. Whether they had been wiped out or had managed to survive and build a new village somewhere, even Ruijerd did not know.

“This all happened because of Laplace. But the terrible reputation of the Superds is also my responsibility. Even if I am the last one alive, I want to erase that reputation.”

That was how Ruijerd concluded his story.

★ ★ ★

His words were clumsy, never meant to be emotionally compelling. But Ruijerd’s regret, his anger, his frustration—every emotion came through clearly.

If this had been a made-up story, if his way of speaking or his tone had been mere acting, then I would respect him in a completely different way.

“What a terrible story…”

His Spear is a Little Short

Season 1 - Blu-ray Disk 3

Ruijerd Superdia.

He was born to a warrior couple of the Superd tribe, a boy who was stubborn and inflexible. However, he was exceptionally strong in fights.

From the time his tail fell off until he reached adulthood, he never lost to anyone his age. It wasn't because he had superior strength or agility. There were certainly some children who had better physiques than him. Nor was it because he had superior reaction speed. There were children who could react faster than him. Of course, he was among the top in both categories among the children, but still...

What set him apart was his situational awareness and decisiveness. He could make the optimal choice without hesitation, allowing him to seize victory by recognizing the opportunity to win, no matter how strong his opponent was.

Moreover, he was a hard worker. From a young age, he never skipped his daily training and always asked his father for more. He had talent, suitability, and the drive to act. With such qualities, success was inevitable.

After reaching adulthood, Ruijerd Superdia quickly rose to prominence and eventually became the warrior chief in just a few decades. This was an exceptional occurrence in the long history of the Superd tribe. However, his rise wasn't solely because of his excellence.

It was also due to war.

Since the end of the Second Great Human-Demon War, thousands of years had passed. The Demon Continent had experienced a long period of peace... though it faced considerable oppression from other races, but there were no major wars for over a thousand years.

Amidst this, turmoil erupted on the Demon Continent. A man named Laplace emerged and began subjugating the demon kings who reigned over the Demon Continent one by one. The demon kings either fought and were defeated or joined his ranks without resistance. Laplace never experienced a single defeat and was on the verge of unifying the Demon Continent.

His influence eventually reached the Babinos region, home to many Superd settlements. Like other races, the Superd tribe had to choose whether to resist or submit to Laplace.

The tribe was divided into two opposing factions.

The elders opposed submission. They had lived since the time of the Great Demon Emperor Kishirika Kishirisu and participated in the Second Great Human-Demon War. Their loyalty to Kishirika remained strong, and they refused to bow to a mysterious newcomer.

On the other hand, the young people chose to embrace Laplace's cause. His vision of unifying the Demon Continent and invading the lands of other races to reclaim fertile lands seemed very appealing to them. The promise of rectifying their current status as despised and enslaved beings resonated deeply with the young who did not remember the devastating defeat of the Second Great Human-Demon War.

Normally, the elders' opinions would prevail. The Superd tribe, known for their longevity, placed great weight on the words of their elders. However, too much time had passed since Kishirika Kishirisu's era.

The number of dissatisfied young people was overwhelmingly large and their momentum was strong. The elders did not view the current situation favorably either, and they had already realized that their time had passed. Kishirika's influence had weakened, and there wasn't enough loyalty left to overturn the young people's decision.

When the Superd tribe joined Laplace's army, a generational change occurred. The Superd tribe was divided into those who stayed in the village and the warrior groups that went to war.

The warriors were chosen from the best of the Superd tribe, and the strongest among them would become the warrior chief. Before joining Laplace's army, a festival was held, and all the warriors participated in a knockout tournament.

Ruijerd was the last one standing.

Thus, Ruijerd became the warrior chief and led the warriors into Laplace's army. If it weren't for the war, it would have taken him hundreds of years to become the warrior chief.

★ ★ ★

When Ruijerd was appointed as the warrior chief, he married a woman named Luvilia. Luvilia was older than Ruijerd and not a warrior.

Unlike most of the Superd tribe, she was not adept at fighting and was more active in managing household and village matters. She was a cheerful girl who treated everyone equally, making her popular among the young warriors.

Ruijerd was already a stubborn man who didn’t say much at that time, and many of his peers and elders thought, "I don't really understand that guy," or "He always seems angry and scary."

Luvilia was one of the few who understood him. She had looked after him like an older sister when he was young. Ruijerd was a stubborn child who often didn't listen to his parents, but he usually heeded Luvilia's words. That's probably why the tribe leader paired her with Ruijerd, hoping she would act as a leash.

Whether that strategy worked or not is unclear. However, Ruijerd and Luvilia had a child together. From the outside, they appeared to be a loving couple.

"Welcome back, dear. How was this expedition?"

Whenever there was a major battle, the Superd tribe would return to the Babinos region and their homes. When Ruijerd returned home, Luvilia would eagerly engage him in conversation.

"It was a great victory. Demon King Atoferatofe surrendered, and the Great Demon Emperor Kishirika Kishirisu is dead. But Demon King Badigadi is enraged and has declared all-out war against us."

"Badigadi, the Demon King who served as the strategist for the demon army in the last war? Is everything going to be alright?"

"Nothing has changed. As always, Lord Laplace will conquer the city of Rikarisu and defeat Badigadi."

By the time the Superd tribe joined, Laplace's army was already formidable. Several belligerent demon kings and warrior races had joined his cause. Moreover, Laplace, the supreme commander, was wise and always fought winnable battles. Even in battles they could win with ease, he devised strategies to minimize casualties and executed them flawlessly. At least after the Superd tribe joined, they never lost a battle.

"Are you sure?"

"That person is exceptional. We can trust him and follow his lead."

Within the vast army, the Superd tribe was especially valued.

They were paired with the Migurd tribe, who could communicate over long distances via telepathy, and were deployed at critical moments in every battle. Despite being newcomers, they were used as the key to victory in battles.

As a result, they were able to achieve great military successes in many combats, and the position of the Superd tribe within the army rapidly rose. Before long, they became a core part of Laplace's army and were held in high regard.

Laplace had high expectations for the Superd tribe, and the Superd tribe met those expectations. As a result, the Superd tribe's loyalty to Laplace grew stronger. The warrior chief, Ruijerd, also came to trust Laplace and developed a strong sense of belonging to Laplace's army.

"If you say so, then it must be alright."

"Yes."

The conversation wasn't lively, but Luvilia smiled brightly. It was only she who could tell that Ruijerd was in a good mood. She was the only one who saw that Ruijerd was enjoying himself after joining Laplace's army.

"...By the way, during this expedition, a child was born. Could you give him a name?"

Luvilia suddenly said, glancing at the corner of the room.

There, a baby was sleeping.

The baby had a face that resembled Ruijerd's, but the eyes seemed to take after Luvilia's. Ruijerd glanced at the baby and then averted his gaze.

"Anything is fine. You name him."

"Okay."

Luvilia chuckled and nodded without objecting. She knew that Ruijerd was at a loss. Although his words were dismissive, to Luvilia, it sounded like he was saying, "I don't know what to name him, so please help me."

"....."

Ruijerd stood in front of the baby, looking down at its face. As usual, he had his sour expression.

"Do you like children?"

"I hate them."

"Why?"

"Because I don't understand them."

As Ruijerd said this, he gently extended his finger towards the baby. The baby smiled and grabbed his finger.

"You're stronger than I expected."

"You were stronger."

"Naturally."

Talking about when he was about the same age, Luvilia laughed. As she laughed, the baby suddenly started to cry.

"Why... why is he crying?"

Ruijerd, wearing a stern expression, looked down and did nothing. Luvilia smiled softly, picked up the baby, and rocked him gently while patting his head. Tenderly, lovingly. The child quickly stopped crying.

"Hey, why don't you try holding him too? Just hold him like this and pat his head."

"No... I'm good," Ruijerd said.

What filled his mind was the image of the enemy soldier he had killed just the other day. The soldier was a warrior of the Toka tribe, known for their tough skin, but Ruijerd's spear had torn through that skin, and his fists had shattered his bones.

The child before him seemed infinitely more fragile than the Toka warrior. Ruijerd felt that if he held the child, he might crush him.

"I see."

Luvilia, perhaps unaware of Ruijerd's inner turmoil, continued to smile gently.

★★★

Time passed once more.

Sometime after Demon King Badigadi had been defeated, Laplace began to be known as 'Demon God Laplace. The Laplace army was also called the Demon God army, and with it, the Superd tribe's reputation rose significantly. They became so renowned that people said, "Where there is the Demon God army, there are the Superd."

A bard who saw them once said:

"With green hair and white skin, wielding alabaster spears, the Demon God's minions hunt their prey endlessly.〜"

The Superd tribe, hearing this, proudly brandished their spears.

"We are the Superd tribe. Swift and relentless hunters who pursue their prey to the ends of the earth," they proclaimed.

In the Demon God army, everyone stepped aside for the Superd tribe. Well, maybe not everyone. Demon King Atoferatofe, for instance, would block their path and pick a fight. Some Superd warriors fell victim to this, but they held no grudges. After all, their opponent was the notorious Demon King Atofe. It was their own fault for catching her eye.

As they fought through numerous battles and the Demon Continent was unified, the Superd warriors were selected as Laplace's personal guard. Their duties remained unchanged, but their loyalty to Laplace grew stronger. Eventually, Laplace subdued the last of the demon kings and became the undisputed ruler of the Demon Continent. Next, they would finally invade the Central Continent and Milis Continent.

"We're set to invade the Central and Milis Continents tomorrow. I won't be back for several years."

Hearing this, Luvilia looked slightly lonely but said nothing. During wartime, it wasn't uncommon for couples not to see each other for years.

"May you have good fortune in battle."

"Under Lord Laplace's command, fortune in battle is assured."

They were never a couple of many words.

However, Ruijerd would always return home between battles. Despite his established position and numerous responsibilities within the Demon God Army, he always made it back home. There was an indescribable sense of comfort at home, or rather, with Luvilia.

"Take that!"

A shadow of an assassin closed in on Ruijerd.

The assassin, who had been hiding near the ceiling, saw Ruijerd, completely at ease, and deemed it the perfect opportunity to strike.

"....."

"Ouch!"

A light sound echoed as the assassin tumbled and rolled. When Ruijerd turned around, he saw a small child. The child still had a short tail attached to its rear and was holding a toy spear.

The child jumped up, puffed out his chest, and looked at Ruijerd. Then, the child charged at Ruijerd again, only to be effortlessly deflected once more.

"...What are you trying to do?"

"Recently, he's been participating in the training sessions with the apprentice warriors. He probably wants to show you the results of his training," Luvilia said.

".....I see."

During the war, the education of the Superd children was conducted by those who remained in the village. Retired warriors would teach the children how to use spears, and the children would compete and train with each other, growing into warriors. Ideally, it was the duty of the parents to teach their children the way of the spear.

However, with the ongoing war, this had become impossible, so the current system was the best solution. In the current Superd education system, there was no room for parental involvement.

Yet, children still wanted to show their parents what they had learned.

When the warriors returned from their expeditions, the children would demonstrate their training results, and the parents would correct their mistakes and teach them their own techniques.

"Weren't you like that at his age?"

"No. I learned everything about the spear directly from my father."

"That's right, isn't it..."

When Ruijerd said that and looked at the child, the boy once again puffed out his chest.

Ruijerd, recalling what his own father had taught him, began to speak.

"...If you're going to launch a surprise attack, don't make any noise."

"....."

"When holding a spear, grip it closer to your body with your dominant hand, otherwise you won't be able to use your elbow properly."

Ruijerd, still wearing a stern expression, said these things. These were both lessons he had learned from his father. However, the child's eyes began to fill with tears.

"Waaah!"

The child started crying and ran into the back of the house.

"...Why is he crying?"

"When it comes to times like this, you should just praise him. He’s only just started," Luvilia said.

“There was nothing worth praising,” Ruijerd responded.

“You may think so, but this was his first time showing you.”

“If he gets cut down at first sight, he’ll lose his life.”

“...I suppose so,” Luvilia sighed, which was rare for her.

Ruijerd was incredibly clumsy when it came to dealing with children, and her stubborn husband was unlikely to change much. She worried that this would only end up being unfair to their child. What should she do?

However, even if Ruijerd didn’t change, their child did.

"Lower your hips more. Don’t rely on your tail for balance."

"Lower my hips more! Don’t rely on my tail for balance?"

By the time Ruijerd returned to the village a few more times, the child had grown accustomed to his father’s mannerisms. Instead of seeking indirect praise, the child continued to directly request training and guidance, believing that one day it would lead to praise.

“Train until you can’t stand anymore.”

“Keep training until I can’t stand anymore!”

Contrary to his expectations, Ruijerd never praised him, but the child didn’t mind. After all, He was a father to be proud of.

The information coming from outside the village was mostly about the war, and nearly all of it praised Ruijerd.

Ruijerd Superdia defeated a renowned warrior in a duel in the northern part of the Central Continent. He slew a rogue dragon that attacked their camp. He even angered the Demon King Atofe but managed to escape unscathed.

Each piece of news contained at least one element that praised Ruijerd. The child listened with pride and vowed to become like his father someday.

Thus, he adored his father even though he never received praise, asked for more training, listened to what he was told, and made it his strength. Ruijerd didn't know this, but there was no way he could dislike a child who adored him. Though, his way of showing affection was quite clumsy.

"He's inexperienced, but he'll become a fine warrior in the future," Ruijerd would say, never directly to the child but to his wife, Luvilia.

"He is your child, after all."

"That's true..."

Ruijerd, unusually, broke his stern expression and lifted the corner of his mouth. Considering he used to say he disliked children, this was quite a change. Luvilia, too, watched this change in Ruijerd with a warm gaze.

"By the way, what's his name?"

"....."

That question left her momentarily speechless.

By the way, his son's name was Ruivild.

★ ★ ★

Children grow up fast.

By the time the Demon God's army began to slowly expand its territory into the Central Continent, Ruivild's tail had begun to harden.

"Father! How did the battle go this time?"

"We won, of course. But I heard we struggled quite a bit in the south."

"The south? Does that mean Lady Atofe?"

"Yes. That woman is weak against trickery."

"Will she be alright?"

"No need to worry. Thanks to the red dragons that Lord Laplace released, they can't coordinate well. Even if we are struggling now, it’s only a matter of time."

At that time, the situation was still not stable. In the southern part of the Central Continent, massive kingdoms were banding together to repel the Demon God’s army's invasion. In the north, heavy snowfall slowed the advance, hindering their progress.

However, it wasn’t as if they were at a disadvantage. Laplace released a horde of red dragons into the mountains of the Central Continent, dividing the northern, southern, and western regions. Along with that, he employed diversionary tactics to concentrate the enemy's forces in one spot, then used the Seafolk's mobility to launch a surprise attack from another direction, capturing a coastal nation.

The Demon God’s army intended to use this foothold to continue their invasion. From Ruijerd's perspective, having come this far, it was only a matter of time. Humans are intelligent but weak. There was no way they could win against demons in a direct confrontation.

"The next time I return, your tail might have come off."

"Yes!"

At some point, Ruijerd started looking forward to his son’s growth. Whether it was his spear skills or his movements, they still left much to be desired, but it seemed his son was brimming with potential as a warrior, garnering praise from the warriors protecting the village. "As expected of your son. He’s excellent." Such words made him feel proud, even though it wasn’t about himself.

However, he was somewhat concerned that, as a Superd warrior, his son was slightly short and small. A small body could be a disadvantage for a warrior. For example, a small person has a short tail. A short tail means a shorter spear, which creates concerns about reach. The difference in reach could mean life or death in combat.

Of course, Ruijerd himself wasn’t particularly tall among the Superd tribe, and he knew that small warriors had their ways, and that a warrior's worth wasn’t determined by their size. Even though he knew it was a trivial concern, he couldn't help but worry. Ruijerd’s expression hardened more than usual due to this inexplicable emotion.

"If your tail comes off and you are recognized as a warrior, you will go to the battlefield."

As if to shake off this emotion, he said that, and his son looked up at him with a serious face, nodding with a sincere gaze.

"I look forward to fighting alongside you, Father!"

"Train well now so you won't be a burden."

"Yes!"

Imagining his son fighting under his command made Ruijerd's stern expression soften slightly.

"Um, dear, are you really sure the battle is going well?"

"No problem."

"But you never came back at a time like this before."

"Ah... That's true. Indeed, things will get intense from here on. Lord Laplace had something to discuss, and I wanted to consult with the chieftain."

"Is it something you can't tell us?"

"...No, well..."

At this time, Ruijerd and the other Superd warriors were faced with a decision imposed by Laplace.

It was about their spears.

Laplace proposed bestowing a certain magical spear upon the Superd warriors — to all of them.

It was an honor.

However, to the Superd tribe, the spear is their very soul. Superds are born with tails that harden and fall off when they become adults, transforming into spears. They live, fight, and die with this spear, it could be considered their alter-ego. That is considered the best life for a Superd. Abandoning their spear and taking up another is unthinkable.

But the one offering these spears was none other than Laplace. Ruijerd and the other Superd warriors trusted Laplace and swore allegiance to him.

Could they easily refuse the spear offered by Laplace?

Ruijerd had come to consult the chieftain and elders about this. Consulting, yes, but more specifically, he wanted their backing. He wanted them to say that, despite the spear being the Superd's soul, loyalty to Laplace should take precedence in this war.

However, the chieftains did not give Ruijerd the response he had hoped for. The spear is the soul of the Superd. Their pride. Discarding it is unthinkable. This response did not consider their loyalty to Laplace at all, which was hard for the Laplace-devoted Ruijerd to accept.

But this was just Ruijerd's perspective, not the consensus of all the warriors. Half of the warriors were also against changing their spears. Their concerns included the potential drop in combat effectiveness with an unfamiliar weapon and a vague fear of abandoning their traditions. However, they said they would ultimately follow Ruijerd's decision.

"If Ruijerd is taking it, I'll take it too."

It was Ruijerd's decision to make.

As the warrior chief and the most trusted warrior among the Superds, it was up to Ruijerd. Of course, Ruijerd himself did not think it was a good idea to abandon his spear.

Had anyone else suggested it, he would have instantly rejected it. But the one offering the magical spears was none other than Laplace. During the unification of the Demon Continent, Ruijerd had witnessed Laplace's wisdom many times. He had overturned disadvantages, using surprising tactics and strategies to subdue demon kings.

While wise men doubted victory, Laplace always led them to triumph. Establishing a foothold on the Central Continent was largely due to Laplace's strategy. The rise in the Superd tribe's status was because Laplace had favored them greatly. That's why he thought:

(Lord Laplace must have some plan.)

And so Ruijerd made his decision.

He didn't think for a moment that his judgment was wrong.

★ ★ ★

From this point, Ruijerd's memories rapidly became hazy.

What he clearly remembers is the astonished faces of the warriors when they took hold of the magical spears.

The power derived from the magical spears was so astonishing that even the seasoned Superd warriors were taken aback. At that moment, none of them doubted Laplace. Receiving spears with such power meant that Laplace trusted the Superd tribe the most within the Demon God Army and had high expectations for them. Hence, everyone genuinely believed that they had to fight with all their might to meet those expectations.

There was no doubt that the magical spears held immense power. Ruijerd himself could never forget the sense of omnipotence he felt when he first grasped the magical spear. From then on, it was a time of fierce battles. There was no time to return to the village.

Fight, rest, fight again, rest a bit, and fight once more. It was a monotonous and brutal cycle.

He remembers none of the details. Just a vague recollection of searching for enemies, finding them, and slaughtering them.

Attacking the enemy army from the flank and slaughtering them, launching night raids and slaughtering them, ambushing pursuing enemies and slaughtering them, ravaging enemy camps and slaughtering them, assaulting enemy forts and slaughtering them, attacking enemy castles and slaughtering them, slaughtering towns, slaughtering villages.

The emotions he felt during that time were joy and a sense of superiority.

The Superd tribe is superior. Humans are no match. Look, this one falls with a single blow. This one too. This one looks a bit tougher, but at most three or four hits. Hahaha, weaklings. See, they're wiped out. Pathetic, human warriors! Let's move on. For Lord Laplace, let's crush the enemies. Show them the pride of the Superd tribe.

As he continued fighting, even those emotions faded away.

An enemy. Kill it. A human. Kill it. Wipe them out. Next. Why? Who cares, kill the enemy. Did you hear? A Superd village was attacked. Then the attackers are the enemy. They're the enemy. Look, they're trembling. They claim to be allies. They're screaming, asking why. Who cares. They're humans. Kill humans. Kill them all.[26]

Just kill them.

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[26] It seems that, with the curse of fear, they also took the hatred towards humans (Hito) from Laplace.

Kill, kill, kill.

Kill.

And then the tragedy happened.

★★★

After the tragedy, Ruijerd Superdia exacted his revenge on Laplace.

He intervened in the final battle between the human heroes and Laplace, leading the humans to victory. After that, he returned once to the ruins of the Superd village. He burned the bodies, buried the bones, and then walked away from the desolated Superd village. After walking for a while, he looked back and saw the land where he was born and raised.

A homeland with nothing and no one.

"...I am..."

Ruijerd naturally looked at his own hand.

In his hand, there was no longer his spear. He had lost the pride and honor of the Superd tribe. This was the hand of a fool who had done something irreversible. The hand of someone who would be better off dead.

There was nothing left.

"I, I was... together... with you..."

But in his other hand, there was a spear.

A spear that represented the pride of the Superd tribe, their very soul.

The owner of that spear was a hero.

He was the hero who stopped the Superd tribe's warrior chief, who had been controlled by the cursed spear and had gone berserk, attacking his own allies and even his own family, and put an end to the tragedy.

A hero who possessed everything Ruijerd had lost.

He admired strong warriors, never neglecting his own work, continuing to sharpen his fangs for that day when he would be called.

The hero's name was Ruivild Superdia.

It was also the name of Ruijerd's son, whom he had never once praised or patted on the head.

A son who respected his foolish father and strove to catch up to him.

Even among the Superd tribe, he was small in stature, and the spear from his short tail was, as expected, a bit shorter.

But he was by no means the weak soldier Ruijerd had feared.

He stopped Ruijerd, who had been greatly strengthened by the cursed spear, and brought him back to his senses. He never made it to the battlefield, but if he had, he would surely have become a great hero.

Ruijerd is not a person worthy of the respect of such a hero. He had no honor or pride. He had become arrogant since the days when people said, "There is the Superd tribe in the Laplace army, and there is Ruijerd in the Superd tribe," but he was no hero.

But his son was different.

He was the true hero of the Superd tribe.

"....."

That is why Ruijerd swore to the spear.

He must become the warrior his son had respected.

And he must take responsibility for restoring the Superd tribe's honor and pride, which his son would have surely achieved if he were alive.

He had no idea what he should do to accomplish this.

But looking at the spearhead and recalling the times when it swayed vigorously, he tightened his grip and simply made a vow.

No matter how many years it takes, he will surely cleanse the Superd tribe's tarnished name.

Ancient Tomb

Volume 6 - Mushoku Tensei Complete Settings Material

This happened when we were traveling from the Kingdom of Shirone to the Kingdom of Asura.

As usual, I was sitting on top of the carriage, enduring the pain in my ass while crafting a Ruijerd figurine.

Meeting Zanoba had significantly boosted my creative drive.

After all, creating things feels more rewarding when someone appreciates them. Although making figurines of a Demon, like the Ruijerd one, doesn't often garner much praise these days, receiving compliments from a connoisseur like Zanoba made all the effort feel worthwhile.

"What are you grinning about?"

Eris was practicing with her sword on the shaking carriage, performing something akin to a sword dance.

She said it was training to fight without stumbling on unstable ground.

At first, it was precarious, and every time the carriage jolted, her sword would dangerously swing close to me. But recently, she had become quite stable.

Honestly, watching her can still make me anxious, but I've resigned myself to the fact that even if she falls and gets injured, we can always heal her with magic.

Ruijerd should be watching over us from the driver's seat, too.

...He's watching, right?

"I'm just happy to be appreciated."

As I said this, Eris stopped her movements. She crossed her arms and looked down at me in her usual pose.

Was she waiting for a compliment?

I thought I complimented her fairly often... But then again, compliments are always welcome, no matter how many you get. Oh well, I guess I should praise her. Maybe something like, "Eris, your chest has been growing lately and looks lovely"... Oh, wait, that might get me punched. That's just sexual harassment.

"Rudeus, you're amazing!"

Before I could say anything, she complimented me.

Oh my, Eris, praising someone like me?

Even when the first thing that came to my mind was sexual harassment?

If that's the case, I should try to return the favor. Um...

"Thank you. You're amazing too, Eris. You train diligently every day without skipping."

"Of course!"

That should be safe enough.

...Still, I can't believe Eris picked up on the mood and praised me.

We've been through a lot since the Demon Continent, and Eris has grown too...

"Hmm?"

As we were talking, the carriage came to a stop.

It wasn't a sudden halt but a gentle one, at the same pace as the horse.

We'd just had lunch, and it wasn't late enough to set up camp.

Maybe it's nap time.

Come on, we're not kindergarteners.

"What’s going on?"

I stuck my head out of the carriage and looked at Ruijerd. He was staring off to the left.

Following his gaze, I saw a dense forest.

Was there a monster?

"No, I thought this area looked familiar," he said.

So it wasn’t that.

"What's familiar?" Eris, who had been training moments ago, also poked her head out. She was lightly sweating.

That wasn't the issue, though. She was leaning heavily on me, resting her chin on my head.

I could feel something soft against my back, and I wished she'd ease up a bit.

"I fought around here a long time ago."

"Was it during the Laplace War? Tell me about it!"

"Alright. This was before we acquired the cursed spears."

Eris leaned even further forward, prompting Ruijerd to narrow his eyes nostalgically and begin his tale.

It's strange, but the usually taciturn Ruijerd becomes somewhat talkative when recounting his past.

The war's outcome wasn't a fond memory for him, but not everything about it was bad.

I guess this is like grandpa's old war stories.

Maybe when I get older, I'll start sharing stories like this too.

"When we had nearly conquered the Demon Continent and were about to invade the human territories, we were ordered to scout their defenses. I led a team of five elite soldiers across the sea to this area."

Before invading other continents, the Demon God Laplace sent reconnaissance teams to gather intelligence.

Ruijerd and the other Superd warriors infiltrated the Central Continent, investigating the political climate, potential strategic points, and creating maps.

At first, things went smoothly for Ruijerd's team.

But, as a group of spear-wielding demons, they were eventually suspected of being spies by one country and had to flee.

If you're mapping other countries, it's natural to be suspected.

Not just suspected, they were genuine spies.

I doubt that kingdom imagined they were advance troops sent by the Demon God for an invasion...

Despite being pursued, Ruijerd and his team, who were battle-hardened from the Demon Continent Unification War, continued their reconnaissance while fending off their pursuers.

However, the commotion grew, and they eventually became wanted men.

Most bounty hunters who came after them were easily defeated, but...

"However, there was one particularly strong man among the bounty hunters."

He led a group of skilled adventurers and overwhelmed Ruijerd and his team.

Using not only swords but a martial art combining fists and kicks, an unusual fighting style.

Though they kept retreating and managed to reach a neighboring kingdom, he persistently chased them.

It was as if he had a grudge against them, but it was likely that he was just extremely wary of Ruijerd and his group.

A few demons were conducting obvious strategic maneuvers.

It seemed the turmoil on the Demon Continent had ended. If so, could they be planning to invade human territories? Even I could imagine such a scenario.

Though, if it were me, I'd probably dismiss it with a "No way." Most people would.

There had been thousands of years between the Second Human-Demon War and the Laplace War. During that time, humans had oppressed demons, so they were likely complacent.

No way those inferior beings would wage war against us? Haha, you must be joking.

People tend not to question what has always been.

Anyway, let's move on.

Ruijerd and his team, seeing no chance of victory, tried to escape, but their lack of familiarity with the land led them to be cornered.

Ruijerd and his comrades steeled themselves.

They could ambush in the forest and gamble on defeating that man, or one of them could stay behind to delay the pursuers while the others escaped.

They chose the latter.

They drew lots, and the chosen man stayed behind.

“I argued that we should all fight together…”

Naturally, the priority was to return with the information.

Having been advised of this, Ruijerd left his comrade behind and managed to evade the pursuers.

The one who stayed inflicted serious wounds on the enemy, forcing them to retreat.

Ruijerd swore to avenge his comrade when they eventually invaded the Central Continent and returned to the Demon Continent.

“It was around here that we left him behind,” Ruijerd said, his face a mix of nostalgia and sadness.

It’s hard for me to believe he can pinpoint the spot just from the shape of the forest and mountains, but…

Well, if it left such an impression on him, he must be right.

Eris had been listening intently but seemed to lose interest when it got to the part about his comrade’s death, settling with a “hmm” response.

It wasn’t that she found it boring; she was just being considerate in her own way.

“Well, let’s stop by and pay our respects. Maybe collect his bones if we can.”

“I doubt there’s anything left,” Ruijerd said with a wry smile.

★★★

We found it about a hundred meters into the forest.

In short, it was a monster nest.

It was home to white-spotted rats, monsters similar to a flying squirrel that often lives around here, called White Giant Flying Squirrels.

They were just over a meter in length. Though small for monsters, their tactic of gliding at high speed from the treetops to slash adventurers' necks made them a significant threat. They were considered D-rank monsters in this area.

By the way, D-rank is the level where new adventurers are advised not to engage.

Humans are generally weak against three-dimensional movements.

Naturally, we had no trouble dealing with these creatures, and the swarm of monsters became both our source of income and ingredients for our dinner.

What they had been using as a nest was a moss-covered stone box.

It was quite dirty, likely because it had been used as a monster den.

However, it was unusually well-built for something made by monsters.

The stones appeared to be properly cut, and on closer inspection, the structure was intricate and precise.

It reminded me of the stone walls found in Japan.

"Is this a grave?"

"...There was nothing like this before."

"Are you sure this is the place?"

"Yes..."

Ruijerd, expressionless, looked down at the stone box and quietly said:

"But it certainly looks like a grave. Bones are buried beneath this. Whether they belong to him or not is uncertain."

Well, if bones are buried here, it's definitely a grave. It might have nothing to do with Ruijerd's acquaintance.

Thinking this, I used earth magic to create a bucket and filled it with water.

"Rudeus, what are you doing?"

"Where I come from, it's customary to clean stone graves like this."

We didn’t have many cleaning tools, but we could at least scrub off the moss. Fortunately, we had a brush for cleaning the carriage.

"Here, you go."

I handed the bucket and water to Ruijerd, who silently began cleaning the shrine.

Eris grumbled, "Eh? Cleaning? Really?" but reluctantly followed suit.

★★★

"...Oh."

After a while of cleaning, we discovered some writing carved into part of the shrine.

"What!?"

"It was hidden by the moss, but there are words written here."

"Words!? Maybe it’s a treasure map!"

Eris, I understand you’re getting bored with the cleaning, but expecting treasure in an old grave is a bit too much. It’s more likely we’ll find something disappointing, like an old stash of grandpa’s adult videos, leaving the whole family let down.

Even if it were a treasure map, it’s probably long gone by now.

"Well, let’s see what it says... Let’s have a look..."

As I cleared away the dirt and moss, meaningful words emerged.

‘Here lies a brave Demon Warrior.’

A typical inscription.

It was a bit hard to read, but that’s what it seemed to say. The difficulty in reading it likely came from the fact that it was carved over five hundred years ago.

The grammar is different from modern times.

"Well, it looks like the pursuers from back then honored the warrior who stayed behind and fought to the end by going out of their way to build a grave for him."

"Hmm, that’s typical!"

Eris said, but her face was shining with excitement.

She surprisingly enjoys stories like this.

"Haha, well, the truth is always boring... Wait, what?"

As I continued cleaning, I noticed there were more characters below the inscription.

No, they weren't characters.

Was this a crest?

It looked familiar... Ah, that’s it. I saw this on the monument of the Seven Great Powers. I don’t remember which crest it was, though.

"Ruijerd, do you know this crest?"

"Ah... yes."

Ruijerd seemed shocked as he looked at the symbol, but he answered.

"It’s the crest of the Dragon God, one of the Seven Great Powers..."

"Second rank, if I remember correctly?"

"It wasn’t that high back then. It should have been lower."

So, it was still one of the Seven Great Powers.

"So, does that mean your comrade held off someone who later became the second rank of the Seven Great Powers? The strong pursuer was that person?"

"That’s amazing!"

Eris was excited.

After all, while being pursued, they managed to escape from one of the world’s seven strongest.

However, Ruijerd shook his head.

"No, it was another man who defeated Laplace and rose to second rank." [27]

Despite saying this, Ruijerd had a slight smile on his face.

"But yes, this comrade faced a formidable enemy and sacrificed his life to let us escape. I am proud of him as a warrior of the Superd race."

There was a shadow on his proud face, probably because he knew what happened to the Superds afterwards.

He might feel proud of his comrade, but perhaps not of himself.

★ ★ ★

"Alright, this should do."

After a while, we finished cleaning.

The stone grave that emerged from the moss was cracked and chipped, far from pristine, but I used earth magic to make some quick repairs.

"Rudeus."

"What is it?"

"Thank you."

"Don’t mention it, dad."

Normally, he would respond with "I am not your dad," but this time, Ruijerd just smiled softly. Maybe Ruijerd had indeed become like a true father to me. However, I already have a father named Paul. I can’t just overlook him and acknowledge a new one... Or maybe he’s just gotten used to my jokes.

"Still, after all this, I’ve lost the drive for revenge."

"Indeed."

"Maybe the Dragon God of that time was so afraid of your revenge that he built such an impressive grave."

"That's not true."

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[27] The one who faced Ruijerd back then was a previous Dragon God. Back then, the Demon God Laplace was #2 in the ranks of the 7 Great World Powers and the Dragon God was #4. Later, after Urupen defeated Laplace, “the Dragon God” title took rank #2 and the Demon God went down to rank #4.

Ruijerd looked at me as if to say, "You know better."

"He showed respect to a warrior who fought bravely."

"You're right. That was a thoughtless remark."

I might have gone a bit too far with my lighthearted comment.

I had just been thinking that it’s better to give praise, yet here I was failing at it.

But still, if this had been when we first met, Ruijerd would likely have grabbed my collar and glared at me, baring his teeth.

Considering that, Ruijerd’s expression now was much gentler.

It showed that we had built a strong bond of trust...

"Rudeus, thanks to you, we found the grave. I appreciate it."

"You're welcome. Now, let’s head to the Kingdom of Asura."

"Yes."

Feeling a pleasant sense of camaraderie, we returned to the carriage.

Our journey to the Kingdom of Asura continued.

Slowly, but surely, we moved forward, accumulating small experiences along the way.

Turning Point 2
Volume 6 - Chapter 9

"Rudeus!"

In an instant, my vision of being pierced vanished, as Ruijerd leaped in front of me and stopped his piercing hand from the incoming strike, and I staggered backward, falling onto my back. Over Ruijerd's shoulder, the man looked down at me. His eyes were cold.

"I see... So, you're an Apostle of the Man-God."

For a moment, I thought it was a false accusation. But before I could process it, Ruijerd shouted.

"Run, Rudeus!"

"Step aside, Ruijerd Superdia."

Ruijerd swung his spear.

I couldn't move. It wasn't that I didn't try to run. There simply wasn't enough time. It was a matter of seconds before Ruijerd would be defeated. All I could do was watch in silence as he was crushed like a helpless child.

Ruijerd was strong. He was supposed to be strong.

Throughout our journey, Eris never once managed to land a single clean hit on him. Five hundred years of combat experience should have made him invincible. He was supposed to be stronger than a King-class warrior, maybe higher. And yet, even to my eyes, it was clear—Ruijerd was going to lose.

I watched every moment unfold through my Demon Eye. If I had to estimate, the entire fight lasted no more than ten seconds. Orsted wasn't necessarily faster than Ruijerd. But with each move Ruijerd made, he was slightly pushed further into a disadvantage. Three to four times per second, the gap widened. Every time Ruijerd attacked, he dug his own grave a little deeper.

Every time he was attacked, his balance was just a little off, each time he launched an attack, his stance crumbled just a fraction.

Skill.

It was nothing but an overwhelming difference in skill. Orsted was leagues ahead. Even with my untrained eyes, I could see it clearly. With that

overwhelming difference, Orsted systematically dismantled Ruijerd. His movements were breathtakingly precise.

Minimal effort, maximum efficiency.

If there was a perfect way to neutralize an opponent as quickly as possible, it would look exactly like this. He completely read Ruijerd's reach, staying just inside the spear's effective range.

As if mocking him, whenever Ruijerd tried to push him back to his preferred distance, Orsted effortlessly broke his stance, tripping him up, creating openings, forcing him to guard against attacks that must never land on his body. And then—Ruijerd was completely out of options. He had no way out.

One punch—buried deep in his solar plexus.
The second—grazed his chin.
The third—a finishing blow to his temple.

Ruijerd spun twice in the air before crashing onto the ground, motionless. If Orsted had wanted to kill him with that third strike, he could have.

But he didn't.

He had deliberately knocked him out. Even against someone like Ruijerd, he had held back. Orsted could have landed a single clean hit at any moment. Two, even. But to completely take Ruijerd out of the fight, he had needed three. The absolute minimum number of strikes necessary.

It was a technique that could be said to be the most efficient way to neutralize Ruijerd. [28]

"Now then."

[28] All this description is made to capture "The Dragon God Style", which was created by Laplace and was perfected by the Dragon God Urupen during the Laplace War. We will see more details in Volume 18, Chapter 5.

A Hole Left in My Heart
Volume 6 - Chapter 10

You... you can see all sorts of things, can't you? You knew I was going to meet Orsted there, didn't you? If you had just told me beforehand, "If Orsted asks, don't say my name," then I...

"No, sorry. The truth is, I can't see anything regarding the 'Dragon God.' Neither his future nor his present. I had no idea you were going to meet him."

...Is that so? Why not?

"Because he has a curse like that."

A curse. So, those exist too.

"Yeah. Didn't they have anything like that in your world? People who are born with abnormal magic and possess strange abilities?"

There was no such thing as magic in my world. There were people who claimed to have strong spiritual senses, but honestly, their credibility was questionable.

"Huh, I see. In this world, we call them 'Cursed Children.' There are some strange ones out there. Orsted is one of them. Well, he actually has about three other curses on top of that."

So, four in total. That's impressive. Now that I think about it, I've heard of this before. There's "Blessed Children" and "Cursed Children," right?

"Exactly. They're the same thing, really. Humans just like to categorize things separately."

I see. So, what kind of curses does he have?

"You saw how Ruijerd and Eris were terrified, didn't you? That's one of his curses. Every living creature in this world either hates him or fears him."

Everyone despises him, huh? That sounds... rough. I'd break instantly. I know what it's like to be hated.

"Oh, but don't pity him. He was born as a villain meant to destroy this world."

Come on, don't say it like that. If everyone around you constantly bombarded you with hatred, wouldn't anyone want to destroy at least one world? Even I,

in my previous life, had thoughts like that. I'd sometimes vent online, saying, "I wish everyone would just drop dead."

"Hmm, is that how it is? Well, I don't care. I hate him too."

Huh? So even you are affected by his curse? And this "invisibility" to you—it's because of that curse, right? So, he has a curse that makes him hated, a curse that makes him unseen... and what else?

"I don't know. I can't see him, so I have no idea."

I see... But if he's such a dangerous guy, all the more reason. You should've warned me in advance that people like him existed in this world. Things like that happening out of nowhere are what cause problems.

"I never thought you'd run into him. The chances of you two crossing paths in this vast world were... well..."

Like finding a single sesame seed in the desert, huh? Oh, come to think of it, I wasn't afraid or disgusted by him at all. Why is that?

"Probably because you're from another world."

So people from other worlds aren't affected by the curse?

"Seems like it. The same thing happened when you met Ruijerd, remember?"

...Wait. Hold on. What do you mean by that? Are you saying Ruijerd is one of those 'Cursed Children' too?

"No, no. That was the curse of Laplace's spears. Laplace also had a 'Curse of Fear,' but he transferred it to the spears and forced it onto the Superds. He tied it to their green hair as a trigger."

A curse? He transferred it...? Wait. What? You knew that from the beginning? Did you make me help him knowing that? Why did you make me do something pointless?

"Don't misunderstand. The curse on the Superds as a whole was already fading due to the passage of time. Ruijerd still has remnants of it, but it's been weakening rapidly ever since he cut his hair."

Come to think of it, Sylphie was bullied, but she wasn't feared like Ruijerd was. By the way, why the hair? Is it because it's the source of that magic?

"Because Laplace's hair was green too."

Ah, I see. That makes sense. Even in my world, there were things like that. Using shared characteristics or wordplay to place or lift curses.

"In any case, thanks to your involvement, the curse is disappearing. The deep-rooted discrimination still remains, but with time and Ruijerd's efforts, that can be overcome."

So, it wasn't for nothing? That's a relief... So you actually did think this through before making me act.

"Well, fully erasing it will still be difficult, though."

Yeah, that's a tough issue. But still... That's good to hear.

"Yeah, it is. I'm glad I introduced you to Ruijerd."

Was that the reason you introduced us? If that's the case, you should've told me sooner.

"Back then, you didn't even want to listen to anything I said, did you? You didn't have the composure for it."

...Well, that's true. I probably would've just snapped at you and rejected it outright. Still, even Ruijerd was easily taken down by Orsted... I never expected him to lose so easily.

"Well, yeah. Ruijerd doesn't stand a chance against him."

I mean, he is one of the Seven Great Powers... But is there any way to defeat him?

"There isn't."

So it's impossible, huh? Because the power gap is just too massive?

"He is the strongest in this world. Even with all the restrictions placed on him by his curses."

The strongest? But the Dragon God is ranked second among the Seven Great Powers, isn't he? Who's first?

"The Technique God is strong too. But if they fought seriously, Orsted would win. Orsted can use every existing technique and spell in this world. On top of that, he has unique magic exclusive to the Dragon God lineage—You can think of it as the 'Original Magic'."

Every technique and spell, huh? Sounds like some last-century messianic hero.

"Oh? Your world had someone like that too?"

He could copy every technique of the opponents he fought. Though, he didn't really need to use his opponents' techniques—he was already absurdly strong. Strong enough to make his enemies explode with just a flick of his finger.

"A flick of his finger, huh? That's something. But Orsted is just as incredible. If he went all out, he could destroy this world."

"Strong" feels like an understatement. More like... an anomaly? A natural disaster?

"Though, because of his curses, he can't fight at full power."

I see. Curses really are a pain. By the way, can I ask something?

"What is it?"

Earlier, you said you didn't know much about his curses. You said you only knew about the curse that makes everyone hate him and the one that makes him invisible to your sight. So how do you know he can't fight at full power?

"...Uh..."

Ah, it's fine.

This is our last conversation, so let's keep it friendly. I don't care what you're hiding. I already know you acted out of goodwill when it came to Ruijerd. And thanks to you, I managed to rescue Lilia and Aisha as well. Taking that into account, I don't mind if you lied to me about a few things.

Besides, whatever plans you had for me, they've all turned to dust now. If I could, there's a lot I'd still want to ask. Like why you introduced me to the Demon World Empress. Or where the other missing people are. Or even what your true goal is. But at this point, there's no point in asking.

Well, whatever. We're both failures now, so let's just be friendly. Let's just relax and have a wild party—no formalities. Naked dancing, talent shows, even stomach tricks—anything goes.

"The last?"

Yeah, the last. I mean, isn't it obvious? I'm already dead.

"Oh, I see. So you've given up now... It's the complete opposite of how you were at the start, huh?"

Back then, I thought I died without understanding what was happening. But this time, well... it is what it is. Besides, I kind of had a feeling this would happen. I don't know where people go when they die, but I figured you'd show up at the moment of my death.

—Ah, my consciousness is fading. Looks like it's time for goodbyes. I'm glad I got to have a peaceful chat with you at the end.

"Is that so...? Then, I have good news for you."

Hm?

"You're not dead."

Before I knew it, the hole in my chest had disappeared.

Things to Prepare Before Marriage ~ Part 2

Volume 10 - Chapter 3

“Hmm”

I looked at the ground, there were traces of a door being opened and closed. There’s no doubt that it would open, but it would open towards me. Then I noticed that the marks were a little strange. The marks began from the third panel on the left. The blackened areas were slightly misaligned. At that moment, a memory from my past life resurfaced. During an elementary school field trip, I visited a ninja village. There was a hidden door there. Recalling that, I pressed the leftmost side. A creaking sound echoed. But it didn’t open completely—it was heavy.

"Zanoba, try pressing here," I said.

"Hmm."

I had Zanoba press it. With that, the door groaned and creaked as it opened. So this was the noise I had been hearing at night. On the inside of the hidden door, there was a handle. It seemed easy to close it from within.

"There shouldn’t be any traps... but someone else could be there. Stay alert."

Saying that, I stepped inside and lit up the room with my lamp. The possibility of traps or an ambush turned out to be unfounded.

It was a small room. Inside, there was only a single desk and a wooden pedestal. That was all. On the desk lay a few books and an ink bottle. The bottle’s lid was broken, and its contents had long since evaporated.

As for the pedestal, how should I describe it? It resembled a coffin in size—a solid wooden block, with a hollowed-out shape in the form of a doll. Upon closer inspection, I noticed a transparent stone embedded where the eyes would be. I had a strong intuition—this was where that doll had been resting. Most likely, it would lie here to recharge... or rather, absorb mana.

"Cliff, do you have any idea what this pedestal is?"

"No, this is the first time I’ve seen something like this."

Cliff replied, shaking his head. Cautiously, he touched the pedestal. It probably wouldn’t zap him all of a sudden, but still...

While he examined it, I reached for one of the books on the desk. They had clearly been left unattended for a long time, but fortunately, they showed no signs of insect damage. Maybe that doll also took care of pest control.

The cover bore a title and a crest. I couldn’t read the title. Flipping through the pages, I confirmed that the text was also unreadable. If it wasn’t a language I recognized, then it was likely in Sky Gog Language, Sea God Language, or some other obscure language unknown to me.

Still, the crest and writing felt familiar. Where had them seen it before? The magic university’s library, perhaps?

As I flipped through the pages, I came across a few diagrams. Diagrams of human anatomy, magic circles. Further in, there was an illustration of a humanoid with four arms.

"...Zanoba."

"Yes?"

Zanoba, who had been standing by the entrance, walked over.

"I think this book is about that doll. What do you think?"

"I can’t read it either. But I would say it’s very likely."

"Let me see that," Cliff interjected.

Flipping through the book, the three of us examined its pages together. While the paper was intact, the binding threads were ancient and on the verge of unraveling.

The diagrams, arrows, and text—it was probably an explanation or annotations, but we had no way of understanding it. There were illustrations of arm parts, magic circles, arrows, and notes.

"The diagrams look somewhat similar to the magic circles used in magic tools," Cliff muttered.

"Is that so?"

"Yeah, I’ve been researching them lately, so I recognize the patterns. This thing is probably a magic tool."

"I see."

A hypothesis began forming in my mind. The previous resident... or rather, the first resident of this place had been researching that doll. Perhaps the magic circles involved were considered taboo, so that person had conducted their research in secret. He had likely intended to use the doll as a guardian — some sort of security measure for the mansion. And he had

nearly completed their work. Judging by the doll's behavior, there were still issues to be resolved, but it had been functional enough to patrol the mansion and fight off intruders. But then, the original resident disappeared.

Did he abandon his research and move away? Or was he caught and arrested? Since his research notes remained, an unexpected accident leading to his death was also a strong possibility.

As for the doll... It had probably remained dormant on this pedestal for a long time. But for some reason, it had been activated. It had begun roaming the mansion, cleaning and eliminating intruders. It was likely programmed to return to this pedestal for recharging once it had finished its rounds.

The unfortunate victims were simply recognized as "intruders" by the doll. That would explain the killings. But if it had wandered as far as the garden, someone should have seen it...

Oh, wait. The entrance door had been broken. Now that I thought about it, that was the only door in the mansion that had been damaged.

Maybe the previous resident had replaced it for security reasons. Since the door had changed shape, the doll could no longer open it. Originally, it was likely programmed to patrol the garden as well, but it had been unable to due to the door.

Then we arrived, and by that time, the door had been destroyed. So the doll resumed its original patrol route, heading to the garden. We must have just missed it, and by the time it returned upstairs, we encountered it.

That explanation made sense.

"In any case, it looks like there isn't a second one."

With that, the case was closed.

Dramatic!

Volume 10 - Chapter 4

Ranoa Kingdom, the Magic City of Sharia.

In one corner of this city, home to many students, there was a house plagued by problems. Built over a hundred years ago—It would now be the Greyrat Residence. And the main issue with this house was...

It was a "Haunted Mansion."

Though its aged exterior resembled a Western-style mansion, its moss-covered walls and dried-up ivy gave it an eerie appearance. The man attempting to live in this house was the client, Rudeus Greyrat.

A former A-rank adventurer and current student of the Magic University. He had purchased this house in preparation for marriage, but it seemed that dissatisfaction with its appearance had begun to surface.

What sort of problems did this house have?

Stepping onto the property, one would find an overgrown, unkempt garden. A broken door. Stained walls and ceilings. A leaking roof. A fireplace whose functionality was uncertain...

The word "ruin" came to mind.

"The structure seems to have been preserved due to its magical properties, but you can’t deny its age. It’s a bit too... 'quaint' for a newlywed home, don’t you think?"

The client wished for a beautiful home, one suitable for newlyweds. And so, one man stepped up to the challenge.

The Master of Renovation: "Balda of the Great Cavern."

A top-tier architect affiliated with the magic guild of the Duchy of Basherant. With 30 years of experience, he was a veteran in the field, handling everything from building design to construction. Having studied architectural techniques in the Holy Kingdom of Millis, he had built numerous structures, including an annex for the Magic University.

Though a bit stubborn, he was skilled and good-natured. A man who always carried a hammer at his waist, one who would fix anything that displeased him—even in someone else’s home. Fixing both buildings and apprentices with his hammer, people called him: "Balda the Hammer."

"Oi. I’m finally here. You must be Quagmire! So, you're getting married, huh?"

Welcoming this master craftsman was the client of the project, Rudeus. Widely known as "Quagmire Rudeus." He was addressed casually by Balda, who had heard the name before.

"Yes, Mister Balda. Thank you for coming."

Balda had heard of Rudeus through an old friend, Talhand. Or more specifically, from Talhand’s companion, Elinalise.

"So, I bought this house to get married, but, eh, as you can see... well, this is the state it’s in."

"For now, can I take a quick look around inside?"

"Of course."

As soon as Balda approached the house, his brows furrowed.

"What the hell is this? The door is a wreck. Looks like it was ripped right off its hinges."

"It wouldn't open because of poor fittings, so we had no choice but to destroy it."

"Seriously... kids these days, breaking everything so easily. No respect for craftsmanship."

"Indeed."

The client casually brushed off Balda’s irritation, acting as if he hadn’t been the one responsible for breaking it himself. Balda didn’t like that attitude, but he held his tongue. He had heard that "Quagmire Rudeus" was not someone to be angered.

"So, what do you want to do about the door?"

"What do you mean?"

"Materials, design, all that. If you don’t have any preferences, I’ll make the call myself."

"I don’t have any particular requests for the material, but make it sturdy. And please include a door knocker."

"That’s a given for a door."

With that, Balda entered the house, only to frown once more.

"This place is pretty run-down."

"I-Is it really that bad?"

"The flooring is meticulously crafted, but in contrast, the walls and ceiling are done haphazardly. It’s as if the basement was the most important part, and the rest was just an afterthought."

"You can tell that just by looking?"

"Of course."

Balda’s trained eye immediately identified the good and bad aspects of the house. The flooring, stairs, second floor, dining hall, kitchen, and fireplace were all exceptionally well-made.

It was evident that a master craftsman, skilled in both architectural and magical techniques, had built them a hundred years ago.

However, some areas—like the walls and ceilings—had been tampered with, throwing off the balance.

"Well, this kind of thing is easy to fix."

Hearing such reassuring words, the client moved into the large dining hall.

"A big room. The sunlight isn’t bad either."

"What about the fireplace?"

"Let’s see..."

The fireplace, whose usability was uncertain—Balda’s eyes gleamed as he examined it.

"This is a good fireplace. A bit old, but I’d advise against making unnecessary modifications."

"Is that okay?"

"Look here—check out this engraving."

Where Balda pointed, there was a crest that looked vaguely familiar.

"This is the signature of a genius magic tool craftsman from about a hundred years ago. No one remembers his name anymore, but in Asura Kingdom, magic tools with this crest are traded at extremely high prices. Usually, it’s only small items, though... Never thought I’d find one on a fireplace this big."

"....."

Rudeus recalled something—the crest from the book he had found in the basement of the house. It looked exactly like the engraving on this fireplace. It seemed likely that the first owner had built it himself.

"So, what are you planning to do with this big room?"

"Well, what’s the usual approach?"

"Big rooms like this usually have a massive table and are used for parties. The other side is typically a spare room—used when the main living area becomes unavailable."

"So, it’s not normally used?"

"Not usually. For people like us, one large room is enough for daily life, though."

"I see... Then let’s turn the other room into a space to relax."

"Got it."

A room for relaxation. As they discussed, the craftsman and client moved to the next area.

"This place has two kitchens, right? And one of them doesn’t have an oven."

"If it doesn’t have an oven, does that mean it wasn’t used?"

"Well, there’s a drainage system, so it was probably used for laundry and bathing."

"...Oh! So it’s a bathroom!"

Balda inspected the kitchen and washing area in order. Checking for clogged drains or wear and tear, he nodded in satisfaction.

"This place is surprisingly clean for its age. Maybe it wasn’t used much."

"Master, I actually have a request regarding this area..."

Hearing Rudeus' suggestion, Balda's eyes gleamed.

"Now that's an interesting idea. But materials are going to be an issue—it might get expensive."

"I'll create the materials using magic."

"So, we can make it work... That's some good stuff. Alright, let's give it a shot."

And so, the client's vision was entrusted to the master craftsman.

To the Begaritt Continent

Volume 11- Chapter 9

"I found it. This must be the monument."

After walking for a while, Elinalise discovered our landmark.

In front of a thick wall of vines stood a stone monument, engraved with a crest.

I had expected to wander the forest for a few days, but we found it before sundown. Elinalise must have some kind of "Hidden Door Detection" skill or something.

The monument bore a familiar symbol—the Dragon God's Crest, a familiar sight of the monument of the Seven Great Powers.

A sharp, angular design made of interlocking triangles. It vaguely resembled an emblem that would grant overwhelming power when it appeared on someone's forehead. The details were different, but it was definitely meant to resemble a dragon's face.

But... I feel like I've seen this crest somewhere before...

Ah, that's right. It looks similar to the emblem on the research materials about autonomous dolls in the basement back home. The details are different, though—it's just a resemblance. Maybe the person who made those dolls had ties to the Dragon God...?

Well, plenty of symbols look alike. Even in my previous world, national flags had similar designs.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing, never mind."

Elinalise asked, but I shook my head. Now wasn't the time to dwell on this.

"Let's disable the barrier."

"I'm counting on you."

With a short exchange, Elinalise stood guard while I placed my hand on the monument and checked my notes.

These were instructions given to me by Nanahoshi. A chant was written on the paper:

"That dragon lived solely by his conviction. From his mighty arms, nothing can escape. The second dragon to perish. The Dragon General with the most ephemeral eyes, adorned in green-silver scales. In the name of the Holy Dragon Emperor Szilard, now shall this barrier be shattered—"

The moment I finished reciting, my mana was drained into the monument, and the space in front of it distorted.

Through the warped air, the dense wall of trees transformed, revealing a stone building.

"Oh..."

"I've never seen magic like this before..."

Both of us let out murmurs of admiration at the sight.

This sensation—mana being drawn from me—felt familiar. It was just like when using a magic tool.

Most likely, this monument itself was a magic tool. Could the Seven Great Powers' Monuments all be magic tools as well? If I cracked one open, would I find a magic circle inside?

This incantation... It feels like something the Dragon God himself created. It even mentions the Holy Dragon Emperor, Szilard—one of the "Five Dragon Generals" from ancient tales, right?

This chant probably isn't complete since it lacks a spell name. But if I knew the full version, would I be able to replicate this monument's effect? Could I nullify barriers completely? It seems possible, but it's troubling...

"Let's go."

"Got it."

I'd love to take the monument home, but Orsted would probably kill me if he found out. Better not risk it.

Floating Fortress
Volume 14 – Chapter 1

"Huh?"

As I glanced around, I realized that no one was there anymore.

No—wait.

I caught a glimpse of Sylphie just as she vanished before my eyes.

That left only me and Roxy, standing alone.

Huh? Was I... left behind?

The moment that thought crossed my mind, my consciousness was suddenly sucked into the staff.

When I came to, I was in a completely white space.

A vast, empty whiteness.

Yet, I was being pulled through it at incredible speed, as if by an invisible thread. So this is what it feels like to be a fish yanked up by a power winch. Ahead of me, at a slight distance, I could see Sylphie being pulled in the same way. So, this is what it's like to be summoned, huh?

Still... this place.

I feel like I've seen it somewhere before.

Where was it?

Ah, that's right—the Man-God.

I never remember it too clearly, but this place looks just like the one where I meet him in my dreams. The only difference is that, this time, my body isn't my old one from my previous life. I was soaring through this space in my usual robe. Then, ahead of me, a massive light came into view. It was shaped like an intricate, bizarre magic circle—and I was sucked right into it.

When I came to, I was standing on solid ground.

"Hah!"

It felt like I had suddenly woken from a deep sleep.

Had I blacked out?

No, that wasn't it.

I had definitely been flying through that empty space just moments ago.

★ ★ ★

Sylvaril walked straight down the path cutting through the garden.

Ahead of her stood a massive gate. Though called a gate, it was more like a triumphal arch, a grand structure made of stone.

Before it, Zanoba let out a deep murmur.

"Hmm... What a magnificent relief."

Despite his obsession with dolls, Zanoba was also fairly knowledgeable about other forms of art. Perhaps because he found a similar sense of craftsmanship in them. On the other hand, I couldn't tell the difference between good and bad relief work. Well, if Zanoba said it was amazing, then it probably was. After all, for someone like him to admire something that wasn't a doll was rare.

"Whoa..."

Caught up in his enthusiasm, I looked up at the gate as well. The triumphal arch-like structure was intricately engraved, even on the inside. Its arch and ceiling were adorned with detailed carvings— it was impossible not to look up. As I walked while gazing at it, Sylvaril's voice reached me from the front.

"This gate was crafted by His Excellency Maxwell, the Dark Dragon King. His Excellency excelled in such craftsmanship and magical architecture. Among his remaining works is the bridge leading to the White Palace of the Holy Kingdom of Millis—"

"Uoooohhh!!"

Zanoba suddenly let out a loud cry. Sylvaril turned back, startled.

"Is something the matter?"

"Th-that! Where is Lord Maxwell now!?"

Zanoba was trembling, fixated on a particular spot on the gate. Did he see something I had no idea where he was even looking.

"His Excellency Maxwell is a wandering soul. If he has not passed away, he is likely still roaming somewhere upon this land."

"I-I see... To think... to think such a great man still exists..."

Zanoba was visibly unable to contain his excitement. Then again, he rarely ever tried.

"Shall we proceed?"

"O-oh, my apologies. I was simply overwhelmed by such magnificence."

"I see. Within the castle, there are many other splendid works as well. Please take your time and enjoy them."

With a soft tone, Sylvaril resumed walking. She was probably smiling beneath her mask. Zanoba then leaned in close, whispering into my ear.

"Master, did you see it?"

"Ah."

"A groundbreaking discovery! I'm glad we came—Miss Nanahoshi deserves our gratitude!"

I had no idea what he was talking about. It felt like he and I had been looking at entirely different things.

"Sorry, but I don't know what you found. Tell me about it later when we have time."

Upon hearing that, Zanoba's face visibly fell.

"What? Even you, Master, failed to notice?"

He sighed dramatically and withdrew. Sorry, but I don't have an eye for this stuff like you do.

"Hm?"

As I stepped through the gate, I thought I saw tiny white particles scatter from Sylphie's body ahead of me.

"Hm?"

Sylvaril stopped and turned around, looking at both me and Sylphie. I couldn't see her expression behind the mask. but I felt like her demeanor had shifted slightly... Wait, did those particles come from me too?

"Um, is there a problem?"

I cautiously asked. Previously, Arumanfi had attacked us out of nowhere. It wasn't impossible for something similar to happen again.

If this was a misunderstanding, I wanted to clear it up in advance. And if it wasn't a misunderstanding—if there was some serious issue— then it would be better to leave peacefully rather than fight. I did have questions for Perugius, but not enough to risk turning him into an enemy.

"No, it is not a significant issue. There are many people like you on the surface, after all."

"...Like me?"

That was unsettling. Would we be walking into the castle only to be suddenly sealed inside some barrier? Maybe I should activate my demon eye, just in case.

"However, may I ask you both one question?"

Both of us? That meant the particles had come from me as well. I had no idea what those particles were, but it felt like we had just set off some sort of airport security scanner.

"What is it?"

"Do you recognize the name... Man-God?"

I forced myself to keep a neutral expression.

Man-God.

Hearing that name brought back memories of Orsted. He had asked me the same thing. I answered... and he nearly killed me. Would the same thing happen here? I really hope not. I hesitated.

If I said yes and they turned hostile, that would be a disaster. Sure, the Man-God had manipulated me, but he had also saved me. I wasn't his pawn, but... I couldn't deny I was something close to it.

"No, I don't."

Before I could answer, Sylphie shook her head.

"Then, when you hear that name, do you feel an inexplicable surge of rage or murderous intent from deep within you?"

Sylphie silently shook her head. I shook mine as well. But... I had seen someone like that before. Orsted. If she was asking this, did that mean Perugius was an enemy of Orsted?

"In that case, I have nothing more to ask of you."

With that, Sylvaril turned and resumed walking ahead.

An Audience with Perugius

Volume 14 - Chapter 2

"So, what about you?"

After Ariel stepped back, Perugius turned his gaze toward me.

It was almost as if I was the next highest in rank after Ariel. Or so I thought, but when I glanced behind me, I saw that Zanoba, Cliff, Elinalise, and the others were all kneeling. The only ones standing were me, Ariel, and Nanahoshi. No wonder his eyes landed on me. I placed my hand on my chest and bowed my head once more.

"It is an honor to meet you. My name is Rudeus Greyrat."

"Rudeus Greyrat."

Perugius repeated my name as if mulling it over.

"Teleporting you was quite a challenge."

"...?"

"Normally, that teleportation magic does not work on those whose mana exceeds my own."

Perugius said, looking displeased.

"Your mana is reminiscent of Laplace. Had you resisted with all your might, I would not have been able to teleport you."

"I appreciate your efforts."

Laplace. The name of the Demon God whom Perugius and others sealed away four hundred years ago. Whenever people evaluate my mana, they always compare it to Laplace. It must be quite similar.

"Very well. However, do not think to use that overwhelming and repulsive mana within this castle."

"Of course."

It felt like he was giving me a warning. No, he was warning me not to cause trouble. But why was he so wary of me? I'm not the kind of person who goes on a rampage without reason, and even if I had a reason, I wouldn't act recklessly.

...Ah, could it be that he remembers? Right before the teleportation incident, Arumanfi suddenly tried to kill me. Maybe Perugius thinks I'm still holding a grudge over that. Maybe he's subtly telling me to let it go.

"If it's about the teleportation incident, I'm not concerned about it anymore. So—"

"The teleportation incident? What are you talking about?"

Perugius tilted his head in confusion, and at that moment, Arumanfi moved instantly to his side. He whispered something in Perugius' ear.

"Ah, now that you mention it, I did hear something about a boy who was trying to cast magic toward the sky, the one who was protected by the Sword King during the incident. So that was you?"

So, he didn't remember. Did I just dig my own grave? Now it's as if I am holding a grudge. But there shouldn't be any lingering resentment from their side. I didn't actually do anything. Right?

"And the one who injured Orsted was also named Rudeus Greyrat, was it not?"

Injured is an exaggeration—it was just a scratch on his hand. The fact that he knows about it means Perugius and Orsted are acquainted. I had suspected that Nanahoshi's connection to the ruler of this floating castle could only have come through Orsted, but now, I was sure.

"Talented individuals like you sometimes overestimate their own power. If you have truly wounded the Dragon God, you may have become arrogant. But if you ever think of challenging me, prepare to die."

The moment he said that, the familiars around us released a faint killing intent. I really wish they wouldn't. This aggressive posture is making things difficult. I only came here to gather information about Zenith's condition and, if possible, learn summoning magic.

...Could it be that they think I fought Orsted on equal footing and that our battle ended in a stalemate? That's ridiculous. He completely dominated me, and I only managed to land a single lucky shot.

There were twelve familiars here. I knew their abilities to some extent—from what I had read in books, at least. But knowing a character's stats and actually fighting them are two entirely different things.

And in a battle, numbers hold an undeniable advantage. Even a horde of zombies that can be defeated with a single blow can become a nightmare if

there are enough of them. Not to mention that all twelve of these familiars were capable of fighting evenly with Ghislaine.

As for Perugius himself, I had no idea how strong he was, but there was no way he was weak. If I fought them, there was no way I would survive. More importantly, I had no reason to fight.

"Of course, I would never dare to oppose you, Lord Perugius."

"A wise decision. I favor those with wisdom. Fools only cloud the judgment of others, but the wise sharpen each other's intellect."

By "wise," he probably just means people who don't oppose him. I don't think I'm particularly intelligent, but even I can understand that much.

"Lord Perugius. This person has greatly contributed to my research with his immense mana reserve. He is not an enemy. So... could you treat him a little more kindly?"

At that moment, Nanahoshi stepped in to help. As expected of Nanahoshi. That's right. I have no hostility. Come on, let's be nice.

"Hmm."

After hearing Nanahoshi's words, Perugius nodded.

"Then I shall treat you kindly. Ally of Nanahoshi, what is it that you desire? Money? Or is it power?"

Perugius asked in a somewhat disinterested tone.

Well, at the very least, it seemed like he was willing to treat me as a guest. But still, why was he treating me so harshly when we were meeting for the first time? I was being as humble as possible here... Well, whatever. I should ask what I came here to ask.

"In that case, I have one question."

"What is it?"

"It's about my mother's illness—"

I brought up Zenith.

"I see."

After I explained Zenith's condition and circumstances, Perugius nodded deeply.

"I have heard that in ancient labyrinths, there are entities that capture people and use them as their own ‘hearts’. Those who become the heart are transformed by mana, without exception, they all lose their memories, and they acquire mysterious powers."

"Mysterious powers?"

"The kind possessed by those known as ‘Cursed Children’ or ‘Blessed Children.’"

A curse. Could Zenith be under a curse? A curse that prevents her from laughing or crying?

"For what purpose?"

"I do not know. However, there is a theory that labyrinths were created by ancient demons to make a paradise. The magic crystal at their core distributes mana equally to those within. Those inside are free from hunger and can thrive. It would not be surprising if an ancient labyrinth took people in to improve its efficiency."

A paradise created by ancient demons... a place free from hunger, huh?

Now that I think about it, the Teleportation Labyrinth was filled with monsters. Especially those grotesquely numerous Devouring Devils. I had wondered what they were eating to survive, but... so that’s how it worked.

But then again, I heard that Roxy was starving inside the labyrinth. Saying that mana was distributed equally to all inside might be an overstatement. Or maybe monsters had some way of extracting mana from nothing.

...Well, the labyrinth doesn’t matter right now. What’s important is Zenith.

"Do you know a way to cure my mother?"

"I do not know the details. However..."

Perugius trailed off and looked past me.

"There is a woman who once followed a similar fate and still lives to this day. If anyone knows more, it would be her."

I followed Perugius’ gaze. Standing there was an elf with extravagant golden hair. Elinalise slowly raised her face.

"Elinalise Dragonroad. If I recall correctly, you were rescued from the Bow Labyrinth by my friend about two hundred years ago."

"That is correct."

"You are the elven girl who had lost her memories. We met once before. You seem to have grown quite a bit, but I suppose you have no memory of me?"

"No, I do."

Elinalise averted her gaze awkwardly. What the hell? Elinalise went through something similar? She was rescued from a labyrinth two hundred years ago? Wait, what does that even mean?

"Why have you not told him? You are together, are you not?"

"That's..."

"You are the one involved. No one knows more about this than you."

At Perugius' words, Elinalise hesitated. But then, she answered firmly.

"My memories never returned... but I thought there was a chance Zenith's might. That's why I kept quiet."

She remained composed, but her expression seemed pained. Cliff gently placed a hand on her shoulder.

"....."

I was too confused to say anything. I had thought Elinalise was a bit strange, but... I never imagined she had a past like this.

"I'm sorry. I knew I should have told you, but... you seemed happy lately, Rudeus. I hesitated. Besides, Zenith's curse doesn't seem to be life-threatening. I thought that maybe she had become a blessed child... or that nothing bad would happen at all."

"...Tell me everything later."

I could barely manage to say that much to Elinalise as she continued her excuse-laden explanation.

"I understand."

I had no intention of blaming Elinalise. She hadn't revealed her own circumstances, but back on the Begaritt Continent, she had shared her opinions about Zenith's condition. I had assumed it was just wisdom from experience, but it turned out to be a personal account.

Knowing her, she must have thought a lot about it. Unlike her, Zenith might regain her memories. And when Paul died, there was no need to pile on the truth as an added blow. She probably kept quiet out of consideration for me. Still, I wish she had at least told me beforehand about the curse Zenith might be under.

"Anything else?"

"No."

Perugius asked in his usual indifferent tone, and I shook my head. Somehow, I felt utterly drained in just these few minutes. It was as if I'd been having this conversation for hours.

There were still many things I wanted to ask. About summoning magic, the Laplace War, the teleportation incident... But if I took in any more information, my head might just explode.

"Do the rest of you have any requests? Is there anything you desire from me?"

"Then, may I ask just one thing?"

At Perugius' question, a man stood up. It was Zanoba.

"And you are?"

"My apologies for the late introduction. I am Zanoba Shirone, the third prince of the Shirone Kingdom."

"A prince, huh? Do you also seek my support in your kingdom's power struggles?"

"No, such matters are of no concern to me."

Zanoba dismissed the idea outright and pulled a booklet from his pocket. On its cover was a crest. One I had seen before. It was the same crest that had been on the blueprint of the doll we found beneath my house... Ah.

"This crest bears a strong resemblance to that of Lord Maxwell, the 'Dark Dragon King' and yours, Lord Perugius, as the 'Armored Dragon King'. Moreover, it is nearly identical to the one engraved on that wall. Do you recognize it?"

I turned to look at the wall. Following Zanoba's gaze, I spotted a familiar symbol among the many crests displayed. One was the crest from the monument of the Seven Great Powers—the crest of the Dragon God Orsted.

Another was the symbol engraved on the magic tool that concealed the teleportation ruins. Judging from the incantation we heard back then, it likely belonged to Holy Dragon Emperor Szilard. And right beside that was the same crest Zanoba was holding.

"I do. That crest in your hands belongs to 'Mad Dragon King' Kháos."

"Oh!"

Oh! So that's what was found at the gate. He must have seen Maxwell's crest on the gate, noticed the resemblance, and deduced there was a connection. Impressive work, Zanoba!

"S-So, where is this 'Mad Dragon King' Lord Kháos now?"

Zanoba stepped forward, unable to contain his excitement. However, Perugius shook his head.

"He is dead. Several decades ago. Whether he has a successor, I do not know."

The booklet in Zanoba's hands slipped to the floor, and his shoulders slumped.

"I-I see... Is that so..."

His face looked like he had aged five years in an instant. Not that he didn't already have an old-looking face.

"And you—where did you find that crest?"

Seeing Zanoba's disappointment, Perugius leaned forward slightly and asked. Still slumped over, Zanoba answered in a dejected tone.

"It was on a blueprint for an automaton doll I found in my master's home—in an abandoned house in the Magic City of Sharia."

"I see. An automaton doll, huh?"

Perugius nodded, then asked another question.

"And, was it a fine creation?"

"Of course! The craftsmanship in the details was breathtaking. It was clear just how much the creator loved dolls! As someone who also adores dolls, I cannot help but feel a deep sense of reverence for his philosophy!"

Hearing Zanoba’s passionate response, Perugius narrowed his eyes and smiled in delight.

"You seem to have a fine appreciation for art. Very well. This castle’s treasury holds several of Kháos’ works. I shall let you see them later."

His voice was so gentle it was hard to believe he was the same person who had been dealing with me just moments ago. What was with this difference in treatment? Not that I mind, but still!

"I am honored beyond words!"

Overjoyed, Zanoba threw himself into a full prostration, his face beaming. Looks like Zanoba managed to win Perugius over. Lucky guy. I wish I could get on his good side too...

The Past and a Curse, Summoning and Jealousy

Volume 14 - Chapter 3

Thinking that, I wandered around the floating fortress after my lecture.

It was what you'd call an exploration.

The interior of the fortress was unbelievably vast. There was no way I could explore everything in just a day or two. It was astonishing that such a massive structure was floating in the sky. As I marveled at this, I spotted two figures ahead.

Zanoba and Cliff.

It seemed they, too, had been exploring after the lecture. ...Wait, hold on. Why wasn't I invited? Was I... left out?

"Zanoba, Mister Cliff. What are you two doing here together?"

If possible, I'd rather be a mongoose than an outcast. Thinking that, I approached them.

"Master. I was walking down the hallway when Sir Cliff called out to me."

"Oh, Yeah, I was curious about this."

So they weren't exploring together from the start. That meant I hadn't been excluded. Thank goodness. That's right—we are neither outcasts nor mongooses. We are humans. And humans are social creatures. By banding together, we became the strongest beings on land. Let's get even stronger as a trio.

"This is..."

I followed Cliff's gaze and saw a staircase. A staircase leading underground. Apparently, the floating fortress wasn't just a massive castle floating in the sky—it also had an underground section.

"Hmm... This looks pretty interesting. If you're going, I'll tag along."

"That's reassuring, but..."

"Something wrong?"

"Well, I'm just wondering if it's okay to go in without permission."

"That’s... a good question."

We had been told we were free to walk around the castle. But did that include the underground section? Would it be alright to just enter someone’s basement without permission? If it were my house, I’d be pretty annoyed—there were valuable things in my basement, so please don’t do that.

"Should be fine," Zanoba said.

"Let’s go check it out. Lord Perugius said we were free to enter any room that wasn’t locked. This place doesn’t even have a door, so surely it’s fine."

"Wait, hold up. There are unwritten rules, you know?"

Manners, as people generally call them.

"Is that so... Hmm."

Zanoba tilted his head, seemingly unconvinced. As royalty, he probably wasn’t too familiar with the idea of rooms he wouldn’t want others entering.

"Oh?"

As the three of us stood there hesitating, a fourth person appeared.

Nanahoshi.

Even someone who preferred solitude like her was still human. Maybe she had been drawn by the presence of a group.

"What’s going on?"

"Well, actually—"

I explained the situation. That we were curious about the basement but weren’t sure if we could enter.

"It’s fine."

"Really?"

"The underground section has its own locked doors."

"You’ve been down there before?"

"Yeah, a little while back."

That must have been when she came with Orsted. That gave me pause. It felt like Orsted might be lurking somewhere down there.

"Most of the rooms are locked, but there's something interesting."

"Something interesting?"

"Something boys like you would enjoy."

It had been a while since someone referred to me as a "boy." I wondered if, before she was summoned here, Nanahoshi used to say stuff like, "you boys!" She didn't seem like that type, though.

"If you'd like, I can show you the way."

We exchanged glances. Zanoba looked eager. So did Cliff. I was a little hesitant... but I didn't want to be left out. And if Nanahoshi was saying this much, it probably wasn't dangerous.

"Please do."

After exchanging looks with Zanoba and Cliff, I gave my answer.

It turned out that this floating castle wasn't just expansive above ground—it was vast below as well. In fact, the underground seemed even more complex than the surface. Even after descending just a few staircases, it was clear that the layout was maze-like, almost like a dungeon.

The castle in the upper part was meant to welcome guests, while the lower levels were the real stronghold. Following Nanahoshi's lead, we walked down the seemingly endless underground corridors.

At first, the many doors caught our attention, and we tried turning several doorknobs. However, nearly all the rooms were locked. And those that weren't were completely empty. I had lost count of how many staircases we had descended. It felt like we had gone pretty deep underground.

At first, despite being underground, the place was well-lit and maintained, albeit a bit dim. But at some point, the surroundings grew darker, damp, and unkempt. Doors became scarce, and the corridors became more labyrinthine, filled with intersections, turns, slopes, and stairs leading up and down. Naturally, there was no cleaning done here. Occasionally, rats would scurry past our feet. They had an eerie look, their eyes glowing green, but they behaved like normal rats and ran away as soon as they saw us.

It seemed we had entered a section that was no longer in use. But Nanahoshi didn’t stop. She instructed me to summon a spirit of light and continued deeper inside.

"Hmm... I don’t recognize this architectural style. If even I don’t know it, that means it could be from before the First Human-Demon War, or perhaps..."

Zanoba, fascinated by the structure, walked ahead with an eager expression.

"Hey, Silent. You’re not lost, are you?"

"We’re fine."

Cliff had been excited at first, but now he seemed a little fed up with just walking through corridors without being able to enter any rooms.

"This is amazing! We rarely get a chance to explore places like this. Look, Master, check out this stonework. The arrangement is quite unique. At first glance, the stones are irregular in size and look naturally shaped, yet when you consider that this is the foundation beneath that enormous castle, it’s incredible that it hasn’t collapsed. These stones also don’t seem like they’re from around here. I never had much interest in architecture, but the mysteries of this fortress have captured my curiosity. Why on earth was it built like this...?"

Zanoba was thoroughly enjoying himself. Every time he discovered something new, he let out an admiring remark.

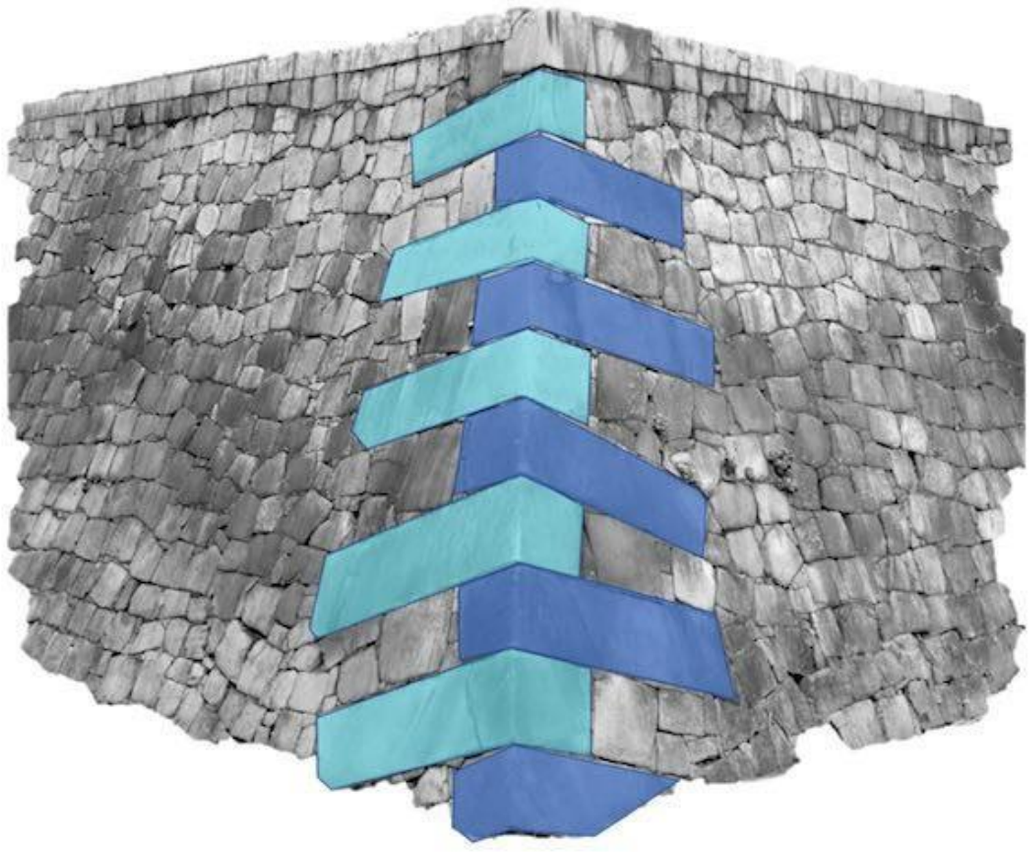
"Master, what do you think about this stonework?"

"I’m not exactly an expert... but, actually, I think I’ve seen this kind of stacking before. Was it called block-pattern piling...?"

"Oh! As expected of you, Master! You know of this block-pattern piling? What’s the principle behind it?"

"Look at the corners. Unlike the other stones, they use cut rectangular blocks placed alternately, right? That increases the structural integrity of the corners."

"Ah, I see! Strengthening the corners naturally enhances the overall stability."



I never expected to see block-pattern piling here. Could it be that the builders of this fortress were from the Sengoku era?[29] No, that was ridiculous. Strengthening structures by arranging stones a certain way wasn't unique to any single world. This world had a rich history of stone architecture, so it was only natural that such techniques had developed.

"...Oh?"

After descending yet another staircase, we arrived at a space that felt slightly different from before. Unlike the previous maze-like layout, this area had a wider corridor and a single large door. Emblazoned on the door was the crest of the Armored Dragon King—just like the one we had seen in the audience chamber.

It felt like a room where something important might be hidden.

"Is this a dead end...?"

I muttered to myself.

---

[29] "Sengoku" basically means "Warring States", which was the choice of 7 Seas. But this world also has it's "Warring States" period, so it's better to clarify that Rudeus though that there was someone summoned from the Sengoku Era from Japan.

"No, this is our destination."

However, Nanahoshi shook her head.

Then, she pressed her hand against the door in front of her.

"Oh..."

Despite not applying much force, the door shifted with a heavy sound.

A slightly larger-than-usual rat scurried past our feet. It had crawled out from a small gap—the door had opened just enough to leave a sliver of space.

It seemed the door hadn’t been locked.

Beyond the door, I could see that the room was quite spacious. There were no other doors in sight. This time, it really was a dead end. Deep within the underground of the floating castle. A door adorned with an extravagant crest, as if something was hidden behind it, and the room beyond.

"Hmm, this may be childish, but I’m getting excited."

"Me too."

Same here.

"You boys really like this kind of thing, huh...?"

I heard Nanahoshi mutter. But don't misunderstand, Nanahoshi—there are boys who don’t care for this sort of thing. I’m not one of them, though!

"...Let's go inside."

Ah, it looked like Cliff’s curiosity had reached its limit. He slipped inside without hesitation. I silently guided a light spirit into the room.

"Oh..."

As the room lit up, an astonishing sight unfolded before us. Murals. The walls were covered in paintings.

"This is...! Magnificent!"

Zanoba, overwhelmed with emotion, rushed toward the murals. Feeling as if we'd just uncovered a treasure, I followed after him.

"Murals, huh? They’re quite ancient..."

Parts of the murals were chipped away. However, since the stone itself was sturdy, the damage wasn’t enough to obscure the imagery. As far as I knew, murals weren’t common in this world. The only ones I could recall were the Egyptian murals I had seen in my previous life, but these had a slightly different feel.

"I can't even begin to guess how old these are... Master, this might be a major discovery!"

"Well, I’m pretty sure someone like Lord Perugius already knows about these murals."

Describing the murals' contents was difficult. But they seemed to tell a story. Every painting featured a unique individual. It gave the impression that this person had documented what he had seen and experienced through these images. However, since they were merely illustrations, the scenes and events were somewhat unclear.

Mountains turned upside down, people with wings, a figure revered by the people like a king, floating rocks, gathered people, dragons soaring through the sky, two figures embracing alongside a single baby, a fallen person, a grieving king, an enraged king, people consulting each other, an ominous shadow looming behind them all... And lastly, a final image that seemed to depict the story’s conclusion, though it remained unfinished, leaving its meaning unknown.

"...I feel like I’ve seen this story somewhere before."

"Me too. But I can’t remember where."

"Hmm..."

As the three of us pondered, a creaking sound came from behind. Turning around, we saw Arumanfi standing there, alongside a dignified figure with silver hair. It was Perugius.

"What are you doing here?"

"Lord Perugius."

As Zanoba kneeled, Cliff and I hastily followed suit. A quick glance to the side revealed Nanahoshi still standing. Someone, please teach her proper etiquette. But really, that question should be ours. Did he come here because he was angry that we entered without permission?

"Enough, rise."

We hurriedly stood up.

"As we admired the magnificent interior of the castle, we happened to stumble into this place. But as expected of Lord Perugius' floating fortress — even a place like this holds such fascinating wonders."

Zanoba smoothly flattered him, and I nodded along. Zanoba was incredibly reliable in situations like this. More than likely, he wasn't just trying to flatter; he genuinely meant it.

"However, we let our curiosity get the better of us and may have acted rudely. Though Lady Nanahoshi guided us here, we assumed it would be fine since the door wasn't locked, and ended up venturing too far."

"It does not matter... These murals were not created as a mere indulgence of ours."

Nanahoshi shot me a knowing look as if to say, "See?"

"What do you mean by that?"

At that, Perugius turned his gaze toward the wall, as if recalling a distant past.

"When I acquired this floating fortress, there was almost nothing left inside. There were traces suggesting that something once existed, but everything had eroded and collapsed over time."

He said this while gazing at the wall, tracing part of the mural with his fingers.

"The only thing that remained was this mural. No matter how many things turn to dust or rot with time, only this mural survives, almost perfectly intact."

"Hmm..."

"I saw the intent of those before me in this. As if they wished for this story alone to be passed on to future generations."

Perugius then turned his gaze toward us.

"That is why I did not place a lock on this room. If someone wished to see these murals, there would be no reason to deny them. That said, so far, only one person has ever come seeking them."

"I see. I am relieved that we did not commit any grave discourtesy. I did not enter this room in search of murals, but... something about artwork

preserved from ancient times, created with the intent of being left for the future... There is deep romance in that."

"I would like to think so as well, but I do not like these murals. They fill me with unease, frustration, and a deep, lingering disgust in my stomach."

"Tastes vary, of course. But in that case, perhaps we should not stay here too long. If someone as clumsy as myself were to carelessly touch something and damage the murals, that would be most unfortunate."

Saying so, Zanoba turned his gaze toward the entrance.

Lament
Volume 14 - Chapter 4

Four days had passed since Nanahoshi collapsed. We were summoned to the round table chamber. Inside, Perugius and all his familiars were present, everyone except Yuruzu of the Atonement. Perugius sat alone on a luxurious chair, while his familiars stood behind him.

"Please, be seated."

Following Sylvaril's invitation, we took our seats without protest. Currently, Sylphie was assisting Yuruzu to treat Nanahoshi, so there were six of us here.

"Lady Nanahoshi’s illness has been identified."

Once we were seated, Sylvaril stepped forward and made the announcement. It seemed they had finally figured it out.

"Lady Nanahoshi is suffering from 'Dryne Syndrome.'"

Dryne Syndrome. Never heard of it.

Looking around, it seemed no one else recognized the name either. Even Cliff, who was probably the most knowledgeable about illnesses among us, wore a confused expression and shook his head.

"It is understandable that you would not know of it. This is a disease from an ancient era, back when humanity possessed far less mana than they do now. According to records, children born without mana often succumbed to this illness without exception by the age of ten."

That... somewhat fit Nanahoshi’s situation. She wasn’t ten years old, but she had been in this world for eight years now. And she didn’t have any mana... At the very least, this confirmed that Sylphie wasn’t the cause.

"The records state that those without mana have a weak ability to neutralize external mana. Over the course of approximately ten years, they slowly accumulate mana within their bodies until it manifests as an illness."

Those without mana have a weak ability to neutralize mana... I didn’t quite get it, but maybe it was something like good bacteria and bad bacteria? People who have mana naturally have "good bacteria" that eliminate "bad bacteria." But those without mana just keep accumulating the "bad bacteria" in their bodies. I wasn’t sure how much I could trust these old records, but it was at least a convincing explanation.

"Do the records mention a cure?"

"They do not. It states that the disease was eradicated approximately 7,000 years ago when humanity's mana increased."

Seven thousand years ago... That was around the time of the First Human-Demon War, wasn't it? I'd heard that war lasted nearly a thousand years. War tends to drive advancements in many things. Maybe humanity found a way to enhance themselves. As a by-product of their enhancements, the disease was eradicated, it makes sense.

Still... seven thousand years was an awfully long time ago. There probably weren't many surviving records from back then. The fact that they even identified the disease was already a miracle.

"So, what are we going to do about it?"

"We will put her on hold."

It wasn't Sylvaril who answered my question. It was Perugius, who remained seated with an air of authority.

"We will use the power of Scarecoat of Time to suspend Nanahoshi's time."

As Perugius declared this, a man stepped forward. He wore a mask with a protruding mouthpiece. A hannya mask? No, it looked more like a gas mask.

So, this was Scarecoat of Time.

If I remembered correctly, he had the ability to stop the time of those he touched. Though he himself would also be frozen, it meant Nanahoshi wouldn't suddenly die or have her condition worsen.

"I see. And after that?"

"We will contact those on the surface and have them search for a cure."

That... sounded reasonable. If Perugius himself put in the request, no one would dare refuse.

"Though, I have no idea how many people would actually be willing to help Nanahoshi."

"Wouldn't your name, as the Armored Dragon King, be enough to sway them?"

"Nanahoshi and I are merely business associates. I will not go so far as to owe favors to save her."

That sounded... a little cold. But then again, I didn’t fully understand the relationship between Nanahoshi and Perugius, so it was hard to comment.

"Do not misunderstand. As long as she remains in this castle, she is a guest, and I will aid her. However, my sole purpose is to find Laplace and defeat him. I only intend to help to the extent that it doesn't get in the way of that."

So basically, because he was busy watching over Laplace, he couldn’t afford to spend extra resources.

If he asked for a favor, he would owe one in return. And if it was for the cure of a lost disease, the cost would likely be high.

Perugius had no obligation to go that far for Nanahoshi.

No—if anything, he was already doing more than enough. He was preserving Nanahoshi’s life and maintaining her condition. He wasn’t going to go further himself, but if someone else wanted to save her, they were free to do so. That’s what he was saying. And he wasn’t wrong.

Search for Kishirika
Volume 14 - Chapter 6

"It’s been a while, Lady Kishirika."

"Hmph! Who are you?!"

As I bowed my head, Kishirika snorted and glared at me.

"Hm? Oh?"

Then, she swapped out her eye and clapped her hands together.

"Oh! It’s you! The human with that disgusting mana pool! Of course, I remember you! You’re the guy I gave a Demon Eye to. Your name was... um... Ru... Run... Roomba...? Roombaus! It’s been a while!"

"It’s Rudeus Greyrat."

I’m not a damn cleaning robot.

"Rudeus! It’s been a while! You’ve gotten big, haven’t you? How’s life been treating you?"

Kishirika patted my thigh a couple of times, like some kind of middle-aged manager.

"Yes, thanks to the Demon Eye you gave me, I’ve been saved countless times."

"Fwahahahaha! Of course, of course!"

Kishirika nodded happily. Simple-minded. Easy to please.

"However! I only grant rewards to a single person! Just one!"

She suddenly pointed straight at Cliff with a dramatic snap.

"You! Cliff Grimoire! Speak your wish!"

"....."

Cliff swallowed hard at being put on the spot. For a brief moment, a thought crossed my mind—could it be? Kishirika, the Great Empress of the Demon World, was famous for granting Demon Eyes as rewards. And Cliff had a goal. If he had a Demon Eye, it might even help him in his magical tool research. Even I thought of it. So, could it be—?

"Well, then... please tell me how to cure Dryne Syndrome."

"Oh?"

"A friend of mine has it. She’s managing for now, but there’s no sign of recovery. If you know anything, please tell me."

I let out a sigh of relief. That was a baseless worry—and rude of me, too. I’d have to buy Cliff a meal when we got back.

"Hmm, Dryne Syndrome? That takes me back. Didn’t think anyone still got that disease these days."

I exchanged glances with Zanoba and nodded. Looked like Kishirika knew about the disease.

"So, is there a cure?"

"Of course! That’s easy. All you have to do is get some Sokas Grass, make tea from its leaves and drink it. Then it’ll flush right out with your poop."

I could feel a grin creeping onto my face. Alright. Kishirika might be mistaken, but at least we had a lead. Sokas Grass Tea—so basically, we just needed to boil it into a decoction.

"Sokas Grass? Never heard of it. Where can we find it?"

"Hmm... in the Phantom City, Maio."

"The Phantom City, Maio!?"

Crap. Cities with ‘Phantom’ in their name are always a pain to find. Only accessible in dreams, or hidden deep in the desert... something like that.

"It lies further north, at the edge of the Red Dragon Mountain Range, in a ravine called the Red Dragon’s Tail. Deep within that valley, inside the Dragon Tail Cave, Sokas Grass used to grow in abundance."

"The Dragon Tail Cave..."

An errand quest, huh? And Dragon Tail Cave? Sounds like a place where dragons are bound to show up. This was going to be a tough one. No, actually... This wasn’t bad. Not bad at all. It was better than searching for Kishirika for years without results. Wait, hold on... Was there even a place called Red Dragon’s Tail in the Red Dragon Mountain Range?

"And where exactly is that?"

"Hmm. At the end of the Second Human-Demon War, the battle between the Dragon God and the Fighting God left a massive crater in the continent, erasing it from existence."

"...Huh?"

So... it doesn't exist anymore? And wait, that's not how I heard it. Didn't Kishirika and the Golden Knight's battle make that crater? Then again, Kishirika wasn't known for her combat prowess... Whatever. Legends always get twisted over time. Right now, the Sokas Grass was the important thing.

"Then... does that mean the Sokas Grass no longer exists?"

"No, no. The Dragon Tail Cave was simply the first recorded location where it was found."

Kishirika shook her head slowly. So that meant it could still be growing elsewhere?

"Sokas Grass grows in the depths of dark caves where sunlight doesn't reach."

Deep, dark caves. Probably labyrinths. We were going into another labyrinth, weren't we? In that case, we'd better prepare properly. Bring about twenty people... or maybe put out a bounty and hire a hundred adventurers.

"So, I ordered it to be cultivated beneath the castles of the Demon Kings!"

"....."

"After all, Sokas tea is delicious! Not only that, but those who drink it regularly have long lifespans. After all, it's because every member of the Immortal Demon King's bloodline drinks it! Fwahahaha!"

"....."

Wait a minute. So you're saying that it's being cultivated beneath Demon King castles? And if it's a high-end tea ingredient, it might even be sold on the market?

"Fwahahahaha! You thought you'd have to go on a grand quest to find it, didn't you?! Too bad! Even here, we grow it in my castle! Fwahahahaha!"

I swear, I almost kicked her right then and there. But before I could act, Cliff clenched his fists and stepped forward.

"You...!"

"Wait, Mister Cliff! Let’s make her spill everything first!"

"O-Oh..."

Crap, my real thoughts slipped out. But if the tea was here, there was no problem. In fact, this was a stroke of luck. As annoying as she was, I should just consider this a learning experience. Alright, deep breaths. Stay calm.

"Lady Kishirika, could you please spare us some of that Sokas tea?"

"Very well! However, there is one problem."

"A problem?"

"Indeed. There is someone rather unpleasant lurking in my castle right now. She’s not very bright, but still a troublesome foe. I’ve been running from her for six months now... Ah."

Showdown with the Immortal Demon King

Volume 14 - Chapter 8

At the moment Atofe saw Perugius, her entire demeanor changed. The bloodlust she exuded was incomparable to before. She bared her fangs, glaring at Perugius as if she had just found the enemy who had killed her parents.

"PERUGIUS! YOU BASTAAAAARD!!!"

Atofe twisted her paralyzed body, shoving Zanoba aside. Zanoba slid off with a thud, but Atofe paid no attention to him. She turned back to Perugius, trembling as she flapped the wings on her back, gathering strength to leap—only for her knees to buckle.

"HA HA—!"

Perugius laughed in amusement at the sight.

"Well, well, what an amusing sight, Atoferatofe. Did you let your guard down again? Carelessness is a specialty of your kind, the bloodline of the Immortal Demon Kings, isn't it?"

"Are these guys working under you!? You set this up just to kill me... What about your pact with Kal!?"

Perugius looked down at Atofe, still laughing. Atofe roared with nothing but pure fury in her voice. Moore wobbled, trying to approach Atofe, but couldn't manage it. The only ones who could move properly in this situation were Perugius and his people, along with Cliff. Perugius gazed at Atofe like a predator that had found the perfect prey.

"Don't misunderstand. These people simply sought my help to rescue their friend."

"Don't lie to me! GRAAAAAAAH!"

"I will honor my pact with Kal. He was my dear friend, after all."

"Even if you're Kal's friend, I still hate you!"

"...And I hate fools like you who refuse to listen to reason."

Saying this, Perugius raised both hands, palms facing upward. Atofe's expression changed.

"W-Wait, you wouldn't...!"

Ignoring her, Perugius began to speak.

"That dragon lived solely for loyalty. Her claws are long and sharp, forever unable to form a fist."

That opening line sounded familiar.

"When that dragon raged, her fists remained unclenched. Her claws will break, and her fangs will be torn out... but in the end, she realized the truth. What kind of resolve did the dragon—who clung so tightly to loyalty—have when she finally abandoned it?"

Each word he spoke carried weight. With every syllable, I could feel the surrounding mana gathering around Perugius.

"The third dragon to perish. The one with the sharpest eyes. The Dragon General with silver-white scales. In the name of Dragon King Perugius, I summon thee—"

Before I realized it, two gates had appeared, flanking Atofe and enclosing all of us within. Both gates were intricately carved with the forms of dragons. One was an ornate silver door. The other, an ornate golden door. They emerged from the ground, rising steadily.

"Open—'Rear Dragon Gate'! Summon—'Front Dragon Gate'!"

At Perugius' whispered commands, the doors swung open. Something flowed between them. From the right gate to the left.

It wasn't wind. It was invisible to the eye. But I knew what it was.

Mana.

That summoning spell, those gates—they were absorbing mana. I could feel the mana being stripped from my body, steadily drawn away. It was different from the time with Orsted. This was much faster—both my mana and stamina were being drained at an alarming rate.

"Ah, Lady Atofe... You must flee..."

Moore, who had been crawling toward us, collapsed where he was.

Atofe's legs trembled as she glared at Perugius.

"PERUGIUUUUUUUS...!!"

Her body looked slightly smaller than before. Perhaps the gates had drained her battle aura.

"Are you going to break the pact?!"

"I won't. But this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, after all."

Perugius raised his right hand. It turned white, then began to shine. A brilliant light filled the area, almost blinding.

"Armored Dragon Hand Sword—'First Slash'!" [30]

Perugius swung his hand down. The light shot straight toward Atofe—piercing her.

"I'll remember this, Perugiuuuuus...!!"

Atofe stiffened, and then, after a brief delay, she was sent flying backward. She was cut in half vertically as she was hurled away, vanishing from my sight in an instant.

"Hmph. She won't die anyway."

Perugius muttered, losing interest as he turned his back.

"Sylvaril. Retrieve the four and tend to them."

"What about the other soldiers?"

"Leave them."

"I see Demon Empress Kishirika as well."

At Sylvaril's words, I caught sight of Kishirika lying face-down in the corner of my vision. Her body gave a little twitch, as if the sound effect "gikuri" would appear beside her. Looks like she got caught in the Electric attack without me noticing. Sorry about that.

"Leave her too."

"Understood."

It seemed Kishirika would be spared as well. That was a relief.

"Haah..."

---

[30] The term used here is "Katana" (刀). Which is fitting to Perugius since Dola never clenched her fists and excelled in "Claw Technique."

Watching Sylvaril and the others approach, I let out a sigh of relief.

...We're saved.

And End and a Beginning

Volume 14 - Chapter 11

"Listen up. You'll come to know this yourself in about ten years... but in this world, the Man-God wasn't originally called 'Man-God.'" [31]

"...What do you mean?"

"The God of the Humans[32]—or also 'The Human God.'[33] There's no one who doesn't know the name 'Human God,' but the term 'Man-God' is only known to those who have actually met him. I don't know why he does that... but it's probably just to toy with those who are in the know."

...I see. No wonder he (Orsted) reacted so strongly to the name Man-God.

Only those who have met him and been deceived know that name.

---

[31] Here, Old Rudeus uses Hitogami (ヒトガミ).
[32] Here he uses Hito no Kami (人の神).
[33] Here he uses Jinshin (人神). And makes emphasis that it's said "Jinshin" (ジンシン).

The Diary - Part 2

Volume 15 - Chapter 2

Excitement filled me.

Deep in the heart of the Begaritt Continent, in an uncharted land where no one had set foot before, I made a discovery—the ruins of the Ancient Dragonfolk.

The murals left behind in these ruins contained fascinating inscriptions:

This world was once divided into six worlds.

- The World of Dragons
- The World of Humans
- The World of Demons
- The World of Beasts
- The World of the Sea
- The World of the Sky

These worlds were connected like the six faces of a die, forming a cube.

At the center of this cube lay the Barren World—an empty space within. To travel from one face of the cube to another, one had to pass through the Barren World. However, crossing through it required a special method. The mural was too damaged to decipher the full details, but at the very end, one crucial statement remained intact:

"The Man-God resides at the center of the Barren World."

I had finally found a lead.

I decided to remain here and study the findings recorded within these ruins. The murals depicted the history of attempts to reach the center of the Barren World. Summoning magic and teleportation magic were originally derived from spells meant to traverse the Barren World and reach another world. Should I focus my research in this direction?

I had examined everything within these ruins. It seemed that the Ancient Dragonfolk had attempted to create something that could reach the center of the Barren World. But what exactly it was remained unknown—the relevant portion of the mural had crumbled away. That it was related to summoning and teleportation magic was almost certain.

With my current knowledge, I couldn't replicate the summoning magic that must have once been described in these murals. When I think of summoning,

Perugius comes to mind. He is well-versed in summoning magic. Perhaps he knows something.

Perugius knew nothing.

He didn't even know what the Man-God was. The only thing he had ever heard was that Laplace became enraged at the mere mention of the name "Man-God." That information sent me back to square one. Laplace must have known about the Man-God, but he was no longer in this world... Could Orsted know something?

Yet, there was almost no information about Orsted. Even if I searched for him, there was no telling if I would ever find him. Perhaps I should focus on teleportation magic research.

Then again, after decades of constant battle, my body was no longer as quick as it once was. I might be nearing my limit. No—while my body still moves, I should search for more Ancient Dragon ruins.

So, this world is a cube, with the empty space inside being the Barren World. And the Man-God exists literally at the center of the world, huh?

It makes sense now.

The sensation of being sucked underground when using teleportation magic—that must have been the experience of passing through the Barren World. Of course, digging into the ground wouldn't physically lead to the Barren World. Time passed, and the next entry in the journal appeared.

This journal is full of gaps.

I have discovered a second set of Ancient Dragon ruins.

Deep in the mountains of the Demon Continent. Why did the Ancient Dragonfolk build their ruins in such remote, dangerous locations? The area is teeming with troublesome monsters.

...Now that I think about it, does Perugius' floating fortress count as a ruin? No matter. Tomorrow, I will begin my exploration of the ruins.

A breakthrough.

I have found a complete version of the mural I discovered years ago.

It contained the missing section that had crumbled away before—the method to reach the center of the Barren World. According to the mural, the Ancient Dragonfolk created five Sacred Treasures. Using these five artifacts, one could reach the Barren World.

Finally.

Finally, I might be able to reach the Man-God. However, I am already over sixty. My body is falling apart. Will I make it in time?

Returning to Perugius, I uncovered another revelation.

The five Sacred Treasures created by the Ancient Dragonfolk were held by the Five Dragon Generals—and the door to the Barren World could only be opened through the Dragon God's secret technique. But one of the Five Dragon Generals is already dead. The treasure he held is missing.

Another one of the Five Dragon Generals has disappeared entirely. According to Perugius, the final missing general will reveal himself within a few decades. There was something cryptic about the way he said it, something that bothered me. Yet, I couldn't recall why.

Lately, my memory has been failing me. Was Perugius still hiding something? It frustrates me. But Perugius is the only one left with whom I can talk about the good times of the past. I don't want to kill him.

Perugius suggested that Orsted might know about the Dragon God's secret technique, but... I have no idea where to find him. The final Dragon General is expected to appear in a few decades. That alone is devastating.

I will not live that long. I can feel my life nearing its end. I don't have much time left. What should I do...?

I cannot obtain the Five Dragon Generals' Sacred Treasures. Neither the treasures nor the secret technique can be recreated by me. The principles behind them are completely beyond my understanding.

I cannot reach the Barren World.

I'm tired.

Just how long am I supposed to struggle alone? Who am I even doing this for? Even my hatred for the Man-God feels like it's fading.

I'm just... tired. So tired.

I could sense a profound resignation in these words. There are only a few pages left. Which means, from the beginning until now, about fifty years have passed. Fifty years of achieving nothing. Fifty years of struggling in vain, only to reach a dead end. Anyone would be exhausted. Even I... If it were me in this position, I probably would have given up much sooner.

I usually keep my research notes separated, but I decided to record something else here. During my studies of teleportation magic, I developed a theory. The magic of summoning and the spells depicted in the murals of the Ancient Dragon Ruins—If these two could be combined with altered procedures, it might be possible to "teleport into" the past.

However—even shifting back just a few dozen seconds in time would require an immense amount of mana. If I were to travel back by years, how much mana would it take?

I want to go to the past.

I have this diary in my hands. If I use it as the anchor, perhaps I can return to the moment when I wrote these words—To the moment when I was deceived by the Man-God. To when I released the rat outside.

To when I killed Roxy.

I don't know if I can actually do it. I have no idea what will happen if I attempt to travel back in time. I understand the concept of a time paradox. There are many uncertainties. Would it happen in the form of time travel or time regression? If I can time travel, what must I convey to my past self?

- The Petrification Syndrome.
- Eris.
- The Man-God.

Will I be able to get the message across? Would my past self even believe the words of a man claiming to be himself from the future?

And if it's time regression, then... How should I face Sylphie and Roxy?

I want to see them.

I want to see them again, just once more. I want to tell them I'm sorry. But when I think about the possibility of overriding my past consciousness— If I steal the life of my happy past self—

Should I experiment more before attempting this? But with the unknown dangers of a time paradox, experimenting feels like a mistake.

For example, if I only go back a few days, there's a possibility that only my consciousness will return to the past, while my memories remain in this timeline, I would be lost forever in an endless, meaningless cycle where I keep looping, unable to die—Just drifting through this world forever.

In that case...

If I could see Sylphie and Roxy one last time... No—never mind. I should stop overthinking this. There's nothing left for me anyway. I accomplished nothing. I am a failure of a man.

Even if this goes horribly wrong, even if it causes some kind of catastrophe— I don't care anymore. Let the world do whatever it wants.

But if I succeed... Then maybe—

Just maybe—

I can finally wipe that smug smile off the Man-God's face.

Summons
Volume 15 - Chapter 12

"To Rudeus Greyrat,

How have you been feeling after all that? Has your mana recovered?

I would like to discuss future matters. I will be waiting at the cabin you used, located on the outskirts of Sharia.

Due to certain circumstances, I would prefer if you come alone.

—Orsted"

After reading the letter, I had Aisha prepare a meal for me.

I made sure to eat properly, then returned to my room to change. I picked the best clothes I could and had Aisha check them repeatedly to make sure nothing looked off.

Then, taking Aqua Heartia and the Diary of the Future, I left the house.

On my way out, I called out to Zenith, who was playing with Byt, the Baby Treant.

"Mom, I'm heading out."

Zenith waved at me absentmindedly, as if to say, "Take care." Beside her, Byt swayed its branches and leaves.

I didn't inform Sylphie and the others. If I told them, they would insist on coming along.

The letter said to come alone. So I would go alone. I wasn't heading into a battle this time.

Do I trust Orsted? That's a difficult question.

However, from the tone of the letter, I could sense some consideration for me.

Even Nanahoshi believed that, emotionally speaking, it was best to avoid fighting Orsted. Personally, I also found him more trustworthy than the Man-God. At least, I wanted to believe that.

"But still, this is nerve-wracking."

Muttering to myself, I walked through the streets of Sharia.

Along the way, I spotted a puddle and checked my reflection a few times to make sure nothing looked strange.

I had decided to serve under Orsted. That meant Orsted was my boss.

It wouldn't do to appear before my boss looking sloppy.

"Maybe I should've put on some cologne?"

I had at least cleaned myself with warm water, but there was a chance that traces of my romantic time with Eris still lingered.

Imagine being summoned to the CEO's office, reeking of something inappropriate. The CEO might not fire you on the spot, but it wouldn't leave a good impression. And I wanted to make a good impression.

Orsted. A man who had a real chance of defeating the Man-God. With the support of my descendants, he aimed to kill the Man-God. I felt sorry for the Man-God, but... he was the one who betrayed me first. That bastard would go so far as to kill Roxy and Sylphie. I couldn't afford to feel sympathy. I would wag my tail for Orsted. I would wag it like a fan and bare my fangs at the Man-God.

I will protect my family.

"Alright."

Resolving myself once more, I headed toward the outskirts of town.

Careful not to get splashed by the muddy water from passing carriages.

A strange atmosphere hung over the cabin in the outskirts.

It was hard to put into words, but something felt different.

If this were a manga, the cabin would be surrounded by wavy lines with a "zumomomo" sound effect. One look was enough to tell—Orsted was here.

"Suuuh... fuuuh..."

I took a deep breath and knocked on the door.

"Rudeus Greyrat! I have arrived!"

"Ah... you're early."

Even though I knew he was inside, hearing his voice sent a shiver down my spine. It seemed I still hadn't overcome my fear of Orsted.

"May I enter?"

"Why are you asking for permission? This is your cabin, isn't it?"

"Yes! Excuse me!"

I opened the door and stepped inside.

There, sitting on one of the chairs, was Orsted.

He was glaring at me.

No, he wasn't glaring. He was just looking at me. His face was just naturally terrifying.

I shut the door behind me and moved briskly toward Orsted.

Standing beside the chair, I assumed a formal posture.

Orsted narrowed his eyes at me suspiciously.

"I expected you to bring a whole group with you... but it's just two?"

"Yes, I came alo—wait, two?"

The unexpected statement made me doubt my ears.

Unless Orsted was nearsighted and seeing double, I should have been alone.

"Eris Greyrat! You may enter!"

At Orsted's command, the door burst open with a bang.

It was Eris. She stormed in, sword drawn, radiating pure killing intent.

"Orsted! If you lay a hand on Rudeus, I'll cut you down!"

Eris pointed her sword at Orsted and declared her intent.

Her sheer presence was overwhelming—I nearly pissed myself.

Yet, Orsted remained unfazed.

"I have no such intention."

"I don’t trust you!"

"I wouldn’t expect you to."

With that, Eris took a position in the corner of the cabin, arms crossed.

Stiff with tension, I alternated glances between Orsted and Eris.

Should I explain myself? I hadn’t brought Eris with me. I had come alone. I wasn’t here as an enemy.

But how was I supposed to explain Eris showing up with sword in hand?

What should I do? What could I do?

"Rudeus Greyrat. Sit down. We have things to discuss."

Just as I hesitated, Orsted spoke.

"Ah, yes. Excuse me."

I sat down as instructed, but I couldn’t help glancing at Eris—who still had a drawn blade.

"Um, about Eris..."

"I can tell from your reaction. She must have tailed you."

"Ah, yes... something like that. Um, before we begin, may I talk to Eris for a moment?"

"I don’t mind."

At least he wasn’t angry.

Still seated, I turned toward Eris and gestured for her to come closer.

"What?"

"Eris, why are you here?"

"You got all dressed up. I was curious about where you were going."

Dressed up. Well, I had chosen my best clothes and fixed my hair.

I suppose it might have looked like I was preparing for something special.

"You do understand that I've sworn allegiance to Orsted, right?"

"...I do. But it's him. Who knows what he's planning? You might be getting tricked."

"Maybe. But it's too soon to say. For now, can you just stay quiet and not interfere?"

"....."

"If it turns out I am being deceived, we'll fight together, Eris. I'll be counting on you."

"Ah! ...Got it!"

Satisfied, Eris sheathed her sword and sat down beside me.

"That's simple... but anyway."

"Excuse me."

"Don't worry about it."

"It seems that Eris still doesn't fully trust you Lord Orsted... But, well, there's nothing that can be done about the curse, right?"

When I said that, it felt like Orsted's eyes gleamed for a moment.

"Where did you hear about my curse?"

"From the Man-God. He told me that you are afflicted by several curses."

I answered honestly. I was prepared to share everything I had heard and learned from the Man-God.

"I see..."

Orsted placed a hand on his chin and looked slightly upward.

There was nothing in his line of sight... Was he just striking a thinking pose?

"In any case, let's fulfill our promise first."

"Huh?"

"Why do you look so surprised? I am not like the Man-God. I keep my promises."

No, that's not it—I just don't recall making any promises.

"I'm talking about protecting your family from the Man-God."

Ah, right. That was indeed the deal. How could I forget? No, it’s not that I forgot—it’s just that I hadn’t remembered it as a “promise.” I had been thinking of it more as a contract. A contract with the devil. But now that I think about it, a contract is just another form of a promise.

"I haven't done anything yet, though. Are you sure about this?"

"You wouldn't be able to focus if your family were in danger, would you?"

"Well, that's true."

It felt like he was being considerate toward me.

Actually, he was being a lot kinder than I had expected. I had thought he would just bark orders at me without explanation. His face was terrifying, but maybe he actually cared about his subordinates? The fact that Eris, standing beside me, was so tense was almost hard to believe.

"So, how exactly will you protect them?"

"It's not that difficult. You can summon a guardian beast with a strong destiny and have it protect them."

"A summoning? But I still can't use summoning magic."

"Then I'll draw the magic circle for you. You just need to pour your own mana into it."

"Oh, I see. That’s a big help, thank you."

A guardian beast with a strong destiny... Destiny—wasn’t that related to causality?

"Will that really be enough to protect them?"

"The Man-God cannot control non-human beings. Furthermore, he cannot control too many people at once. As long as we continue taking action, he will be too preoccupied with countering us. Given his personality, that alone should serve as more than enough protection."

So it comes down to his personality... Still, if the Man-God can't control too many people at once, that means he can control at least two people

simultaneously, right? Was he manipulating someone else while he was manipulating me?

"But don’t let your guard down. We don't know what the Man-God will try. Don’t just leave everything to the guardian beast—keep a close eye on them regularly."

Hearing Orsted say something like "keep a close eye on them regularly" felt... strange. He didn’t seem like the type to say things like that.

Though, I knew better than to judge someone based on first impressions.

Anyway, if he was offering to help, I had no reason to refuse.

Now, onto the main topic.

"So, what do I need to do from here on?"

There were many things I wanted to ask, but I needed to show my sincerity first. It was only proper to demonstrate my allegiance.

"...Do you not have more questions?"

Instead, he threw a question back at me.

"I have plenty."

"Then why don’t you ask?"

"I thought it would be rude to just bombard you with questions..."

At that, Orsted let out a deep sigh.

"You are now my comrade, which means—"

"I'm your subordinate. Let’s make sure the hierarchy is clear."

I had been beaten to a pulp and had my family's safety secured by him. I wasn’t thick-headed enough to still insist on being his equal.

"If that's what you prefer, then fine... Either way, you and I are now working together to defeat the Man-God. You should know what you need to know."

"And what if I were actually a spy for the Man-God? I could be secretly passing information about you to him every night."

"I trust you."

He said it firmly, looking me straight in the eye.

"I trust the resolve you showed when you risked everything to protect your family."

Hearing that was... a little embarrassing. I had been desperate at the time, sure, but... well, if that's how he saw it, I'd take him at his word.

Now then, what did I want to ask? There were a few things.

The conflict between the Man-God and Orsted.
The so-called Laplace Factor.
The Teleportation Incident.
The concept of destiny.

That should be a good start.

"Alright, then please let's go by them, one by one."

First, I wanted to understand the conflict between Orsted and the Man-God—or rather, their relationship.

No, before that, it was probably best to learn about Orsted himself.

"Lord Orsted, please tell me about yourself."

"About myself?"

"Yes. Please."

"What did the Man-God tell you? You mentioned he told you about my curse."

"Uh... let's see..."

It had been five years ago, so I had to dig through my memory.

"He said you have four curses."

"...Go on."

"First, a curse that makes all living beings in this world hate or fear you. Second, a curse that makes you invisible to the Man-God. Third, a curse that prevents you from using your full strength. As for the fourth... He wasn't sure."

"I see."

Orsted nodded quietly.

"First, regarding the first curse—indeed, ever since I was born, all living creatures in this world have shunned me."

"...But I don't particularly dislike you."

"Some exceptions exist. Nanahoshi is one of them."

"I see."

So there were exceptions.

Maybe the fact that Nanahoshi and I weren't originally from this world had something to do with it. Should I mention that? Eris was standing right next to me, so I hesitated a bit... But keeping it to myself didn't seem like a good idea.

"I don't intend to hide anything from you, so I'll say it—I'm originally from the same world as Nanahoshi. Do you think that might be related?"

"...Are you saying 'Rudeus Greyrat' is a false name?"

"That's... a long story. But unlike Nanahoshi, I wasn't transported here—I was born into this world as Rudeus Greyrat. I, uh... well, how should I describe it?"

I was surprised when Orsted nodded in understanding.

"Reincarnation?"

That reaction was unexpected. I hadn't thought he'd be familiar with the term. Then again, I did recall reading in the diary that the Dragonfolk had a 'Reincarnation Technique.' Supposedly, even if they died, they could return to life decades later. Maybe, for them, reincarnation wasn't all that unusual for them.

"It's likely that the reason you don't fear me is because you're a reincarnated being."

"Are there others who don't fear you?"

"With a few exceptions, only those who carry the blood of the Ancient Dragonfolk."

Perugius, maybe? No, but Perugius seemed pretty terrified.

...So that has nothing to do with the curse? Aside from curses, there are other reasons people might hate or fear someone.

"As for the second curse—the one that makes me invisible to the Man-God... this is not actually a curse."

"Oh? What do you mean?"

When I asked that, Orsted took a moment to think. Then, after looking me in the eye, he spoke.

"It's a secret technique devised long ago by the First Dragon God to fight the Man-God... A technique that allows one to see fate while simultaneously removing the user from the laws of the world."

"I see."

"The Man-God also possesses strong powers to see the future and far sight. However, he cannot see those who exist outside the world's laws."

I see... I don't fully understand what it means to be "outside the world's laws," but being able to escape the Man-God's sight sounds amazing.

"And what exactly is this ability to see fate?"

"Well..."

Orsted assumed a thoughtful pose again. Wait, is he thinking up an answer on the spot?

"It allows one to perceive the general course of a person's history."

The general course of history, huh?

"So, does that mean you can see the future too, Lord Orsted?"

"No... What I see is not the future, but history—one determined by fate."

Hmm... Sounds kind of philosophical. I can't quite grasp how it's different from regular future sight. For now, I'll just think of it as "a slightly weaker version of the Man-God's foresight."

"Could you cast that secret technique on me as well?"

"No, it's better if you don't receive it."

"...And why is that?"

Becoming invisible to the Man-God is a very tempting advantage. I'd like to know why I can't have it.

"If I cast this technique on you, it would come with a side effect... Your mana recovery rate would slow down drastically."

"Drastically? How much are we talking?"

"You took about ten days to recover from a depleted state, correct? Multiply that by about a thousand."

A thousand times. So, ten thousand days... Roughly thirty years!

"That is why I cannot use mana freely. It means I almost never fight at full power."

I see. If you can't recover mana, then you can't go all out. I don't know how much mana Orsted has, but if it takes years to recover, he really can't afford to use it recklessly. He has to conserve energy.

"Thus, I cannot bestow this technique upon you, but the bracelet I gave you has a similar effect."

I looked down at the bracelet on my left wrist. Supposedly, it has a jamming effect.

"Does this bracelet have any side effects? If not, couldn't we just mass-produce them?"

"If that were possible, I would have done so already—along with breaking the curse placed upon me."

Well, that makes sense.

"I expended a significant amount of mana in our battle. I won't be able to fight at full power for some time."

"Wait, really? But you wiped the floor with me."

"I resisted your magic head-on multiple times and even had to draw the God Sword. That alone consumed a considerable amount of mana."

Orsted spoke bitterly. From my perspective, I was completely overwhelmed and beaten to a pulp, but... Maybe I actually put up a decent fight? I guess I did my best, huh? Hehehe.

"My mana is running low. That means you'll have to act as my hands and feet."

"...Understood. I'll do my best."

I used up his mana, so now I have to make up for it. Fair enough.

"So, Lord Orsted... Why are you fighting the Man-God?"

"That is... ah..."

Orsted averted his gaze, looking a little hesitant. Come to think of it, he's been dodging questions and pausing to think a lot. Could he be lying to me? No, that's unlikely. But maybe he trusts me, yet doesn't fully confide in me? For now, he might just be feeding me a convenient lie while keeping an eye on me... That's a possibility.

"The Man-God... is my father's enemy."

"Oh?"

His father's enemy, huh? My future self was also consumed by vengeance after what happened to Roxy and Sylphie.

Revenge brings nothing but pain—I can think that now because I haven't lost anyone. But if I were to be consumed by vengeance, I'd probably become a demon myself. My diary made that painfully clear.

"Moreover, the defeat of the Man-God is the Ancient Dragonfolk's long-standing desire. We Dragon Gods exist solely to bring him down."

A grand cause, huh? Wait... "we"?

"There's more than one Dragon God?"

"I am said to be the hundredth. A hundred Dragon Gods have honed their skills for the sole purpose of defeating the Man-God."

"I see."

"But the Man-God cannot be slain by a weakened Dragon God with a diluted bloodline."

Orsted's sharp gaze locked onto me.

"That is why my father, the First Dragon God, used the reincarnation technique to send me into the future."

Orsted stated that ever so casually.

Explanation
Volume 15 - Chapter 13

Let’s organize this a little.

First, Orsted.

He is an Ancient Dragonfolk member who came to the present era through a reincarnation technique from the age of myth.

He carries both a curse and a secret technique. The curse causes everyone in this world to instinctively reject him. The secret technique slows his mana regeneration, but in exchange, it allows him to escape the Man-God’s sight and grants him a limited ability to see the future.

Why did he come to the present era burdened with such a curse?

It all stems from the fact that the First Dragon God was killed by the Man-God. Every Dragon God after the first one exists solely to defeat the Man-God, and slaying him is the Dragonfolk’s ultimate goal. Thus, Orsted, the First Dragon God’s son, seeks to defeat the Man-God.

"So, in short, that’s how it is, right?"

"Yeah. That’s right. You catch on quickly, that helps."

"Roughly how many years ago were you reincarnated?"

"Let’s see... About two thousand years ago."

Two thousand years, huh... He’s been alive for quite a long time. For now, everything seems to line up, but something about it still nags at me.

Hmm, what exactly is bothering me?

Maybe it’s the part about his mana not regenerating? Orsted should be capable of using a summoning magic similar to what Perugius used—the one that absorbs mana. If he used that, wouldn’t it solve his mana problem...? No, if he could, he would have done it already. There’s no guarantee that the mana absorbed through that summoning magic can be directly stored in his own body...

Hmm... Orsted’s extreme hostility toward the Man-God? Losing his father is reason enough, but even so, his hatred seems excessive. It doesn’t feel like he’s particularly attached to his father either.

"From my perspective, you seem to harbor a deep grudge against the Man-God. What's that about?"

"Is there anyone who wouldn't hold a grudge against that bastard?"

"...Fair point."

Orsted has lived for a long time, so he's probably been screwed over by the Man-God countless times. Even if the Man-God can't see him, he could still send messages through others. Ah, maybe Orsted's whole situation might stem from the conflict between the First Dragon God and the Man-God.

There are still some things I don't understand, but that should be enough about Orsted himself. Whatever the case, he has a reason to fight the Man-God. The enemy of my enemy is my friend. Besides, there are plenty of other things I want to ask. Next, about the Laplace Aspect.

"During our last battle, you mentioned that I possess the Laplace Aspect. What exactly does that mean?"

"How much do you know about Laplace?"

"He started a war four hundred years ago and nearly wiped-out humanity. Also, he had an absurdly massive amount of mana but couldn't use Battle Aura. He was incredibly strong but was eventually sealed away by Lord Perugius and two others... Oh, and he also framed the Superd tribe."

I've heard other things too, but that about sums it up.

"That's all?"

"Also, that he's supposed to revive soon."

"Did you hear that he's reviving because he used the Dragonfolk's reincarnation method?"

"Uh... No, I don't think I did... Oh, wait, the Man-God might've mentioned something like that..."

My memory's fuzzy. But still, reincarnation magic again, huh?

"I'll need to hear in detail later about what you and the Man-God discussed and what he's been feeding you."

"Understood."

"For now, let's talk about Laplace."

The moment Orsted mentioned Laplace, Eris' presence became tense and prickly. Both Eris and I are Ruijerd's friends. Laplace is Ruijerd's enemy. And his enemy is our enemy too. So, it makes sense that the mere mention of Laplace puts Eris on edge. But I need to stay calm. Getting angry is Eris' job. Keeping things under control is mine.

"The true identity of the 'Demon God Laplace'... He is the pitiful shell of what remains of the 'Demon Dragon King Laplace'."

Orsted stated it clearly without hesitation.

"Demon Dragon King?"

"Yes, he was once a member of the Ancient Dragonfolk."

Laplace was a Demon Dragon King? A Dragonfolk member? But he's called the Demon God...?

"The Demon Dragon King Laplace was the sole survivor of the First Five Dragon Generals."

The Five Dragon Generals. If I remember correctly, they were the five warriors who served under the Dragon God. They fought the Dragon God in a five-on-one battle and perished alongside him.

"He escaped the destruction of the Dragon World and wandered this world, carrying out a certain mission... as the Second Dragon God."

A Dragon King, a Dragon God, and a Demon God. Hold on, this is getting confusing. My brain's about to overheat.

"He honed techniques and skills to defeat the Man-God. He called himself the Dragon God, passing down his knowledge to those with talent, developing those techniques over a long period of time. All so that when I — who was sent to the future— arrived, he could pass his power to me, the strongest of the Dragonfolk."

You just straight-up called yourself the strongest, huh?

"But during the Second Human-Demon War, Laplace fought against the Fighting God, who had become one of the Man-God's apostles, and his soul was split in two."

I've heard that story somewhere before. The one about the battle between the Golden Knight Aldebaran and the Great Demon Empress. According to Kishirika, it was the Dragon God versus the Fighting God.

So the Dragon God in that story was Laplace, and the Fighting God was Aldebaran? That means Laplace fought on the demon side?

"When Laplace was split, he lost his memories and became two separate beings: 'Demon God' Laplace, who bore an intense hatred toward ‘Humans’, [34] and 'Technique God' Laplace, who sought the power to overthrow the ‘Gods’." [35]

Now the Demon God enters the picture. And the Technique God? That’s the one ranked first among the Seven Great Powers...

"Wait, so you’re saying the Technique God is also Laplace?"

"That’s right."

I feel like I just heard something insane. Am I even supposed to know this? And there’s so much information, my head’s spinning. The First Dragon God was the original. Orsted is his son. Laplace was the Second Dragon God... Ah.

So it goes like this.

The First Dragon God sent Orsted to the future to defeat the Man-God. Laplace was originally one of the Five Dragon Generals, but he either didn’t oppose the First Dragon God or realized the Man-God’s schemes and returned to the side of the Dragon God. After the First Dragon God died, Laplace survived and came to this world.

Laplace spent centuries passing down techniques to the successive Dragon Gods while refining his own skills, all in order to pass them on to Orsted when he arrived in the future. The Man-God tried to interfere by using the Fighting God against him. Laplace, either by luck... or maybe intentionally, managed to survive but lost his memories, splitting into two beings.

That’s the general flow... I think. I’m not entirely confident.

"Hmph...!"

I glanced at Eris and saw her pouting in frustration, looking irritated. That’s the face she makes when she doesn’t understand a thing. Alright, that’s reassuring. Orsted continued his explanation.

"The weakened 'Demon God' Laplace lost his power as a Dragon and retained only his vast knowledge of magic and his vague purpose and urge

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[34] The Demon God has an intense hatred towards “Hito” (Man – Human).

[35] The Technique God wants to overthrow “Kami” (Gami – Gods).

to exterminate humanity (man). So, he united the demons to wipe out the human race."

"The 'Technique God' Laplace, who had lost his magical power, retained only his vast skills and a hazy sense that he needed to pass it on to someone else. Thus, the Technique God created the 'Seven Great Powers' and focused on refining his techniques."

The Seven Great Powers were founded by the Technique God. I've heard that before. I mean, he is ranked number one. But wait, the Human-Demon War was over two thousand years ago.

"...How do you know all this, Lord Orsted? You arrived here two thousand years ago, which means the Second Human-Demon War was already over. If Laplace had already lost his memories by then, no one should remember this information."

"I read Laplace's personal records through the ruins of the Ancient Dragonfolk."

"Ah, I see."

So before losing his memories, Laplace wrote everything down. Ironically, he never found those records after losing his memories.

"Now then, let's go back a bit. We're talking about why you have such an immense amount of mana."

"Yes."

"The first Dragon God developed something called the reincarnation technique. It allows one's soul to be sent into the future, take over another living being, and resurrect."

"....."

The reincarnation technique. Taking over another lifeform, huh? ... That sounds a little unsettling.

"However, normally, the body and soul are unique to each individual. Even if one tries to inhabit another body, a rejection reaction occurs, and the resurrection fails. That's why the first Dragon God came up with a plan—he implanted his own 'aspects' into several people. When those individuals had children, their bodies would undergo slight alterations. After hundreds or thousands of generations, he would gradually reshape the entire species' physical form to create a vessel that perfectly matched his soul."

"....."

"So when a body modified by these 'aspects' becomes a perfect match for the soul, reincarnation is achieved. The newly born individual's body is taken over, allowing the old soul to be reborn while basically supplanting the soul that was originally meant to be born. Several members of the Ancient Dragonfolk have been reborn using this reincarnation technique to appear in the current era. Perugius is one such individual. However, since he reincarnated as a child when his memories were hazy, he doesn't remember his past life."

Reincarnation means taking over the body of a soul that was originally supposed to be born and pretending to be them. Hearing that, I looked down at my own hands. I, too, am a reincarnated person. Did I steal the life of the person named Rudeus Greyrat?

"Hey, are you listening?"

"Eh? Ah, yes. I'm fine."

Before I realized it, Orsted was peering into my face. He stared at me for a while before exhaling lightly.

"Let's continue. The Demon God Laplace had already lost his sanity, but he either remembered the reincarnation technique or found records of it. Before he was defeated by Perugius and the others before he had his body sealed away, he scattered his 'aspects' and sent his soul into the future."

"....."

"And now, people carrying Laplace's aspects—individuals with similar traits—are starting to appear. They have high mana capacity and talent in magic, green hair, and some are even born with Demon Eyes."

High mana capacity and magical aptitude. Green hair. If we exclude being born with Demon Eyes, there is one person who fits this description.

"Could it be... Sylphie too?"

"Yes. Sylphiette is one of them. Though for some reason, her hair is now white..."

"She's not Laplace himself, right?"

"Of course not. He can't become a woman."

I felt a little relieved. But when I thought about it, the most suspicious person wasn't Sylphie.

"Then... what about me?"

"You too. A body capable of containing that much mana wouldn’t normally be born."

"I... thought I had increased my mana capacity through my own efforts."

"Of course, you did. Your body simply had the innate potential to hold that much mana. If you hadn't trained your magic in your childhood, you would have ended up with only slightly more mana than an average person. Just like Sylphiette, that vast mana capacity you have now is the result of your hard work. You should take pride in it."

I... got praised? Is it okay to feel proud about this?

"Uh, just to confirm, I’m not Laplace, right?"

"No. Laplace won’t be born for at least a few more decades."

I see.

Hearing that, I felt relieved. Now I also understand where my magic power comes from. Though calling it "Laplace’s power" makes me feel a little guilty toward Ruijerd, power is power. It all depends on how you use it.

But that wasn’t what really concerned me.

"....."

Orsted looked at me for a moment before letting out a sigh and speaking.

"Don't worry. You may be a reincarnated person, but... in my memories, there is no individual named Rudeus Greyrat."

"...Meaning?"

"Having Laplace’s Aspects means you were born with an immense magical potential. If you were born with a body capable of containing that much magic power, then it wouldn’t be surprising if the original soul couldn’t withstand it."

"Couldn't withstand it...?"

"...Most likely, the original child was stillborn. You simply took its place."

Stillborn.

I... I see.

Then, that’s fine.

As long as I didn’t kill the original Rudeus Greyrat, then it’s fine. I don’t even want to think that I stole such a blessed life. If it means that Paul and Zenith never had to experience the sorrow of losing their firstborn child, then all the better. Alright. Let’s switch gears. I am Paul and Zenith’s child, Rudeus. The one and only Rudeus Greyrat. With that awareness in mind, let’s move on to the next question. It’s about the Teleportation Incident.

"I’ve heard that the Teleportation Incident happened because Nanahoshi was summoned. Could you tell me more about that?"

"...There are still many things I don’t understand about that event. It was unprecedented."

"I was a reincarnated person, and I was in that place. That means... is it possible that I caused the incident?"

"You...?"

As I said that, Eris gripped my thigh. When I looked at her, she was shaking her head slightly. To reassure her, I reached my hand out—only to find myself absentmindedly rubbing Eris’ butt. Soft yet muscular. A truly attractive rear—OW, OW, OW! Don’t pinch me! Don’t pinch me!

"I can’t deny the possibility. Neither Nanahoshi’s arrival nor the Teleportation Incident had ever happened before."

I seriously thought Eris was going to rip the flesh off my thigh. When I glanced at her, she was glaring at me as if to say, "We're having a serious conversation right now!" I’m glad she’s become someone who can read the room.

Anyway, so there’s no clear answer regarding the Teleportation Incident. Nanahoshi had her own theories, but... well, let’s leave that aside for now. Alright, that should be enough questions for now. My brain is about to explode. Even if I ask more, I don’t have the confidence to fully understand it all. I’ll ask the rest over time.

"...By the way, I do have information from the future."

"Oh?"

"Um, please take a look at this."

I handed Orsted my diary from the future. He flipped through a few pages, furrowed his brows, and looked up.

"This will take some time. Your handwriting is terrible."

"That’s fine..."

Is my handwriting really that bad? Even Nanahoshi said the same thing. Well, it’s a diary, so it’s fine if it’s messy. Yeah. But... I should be more careful with writing that I intend to show others.

"Oh, before that, may I confirm one thing?"

"What is it?"

Is it okay to ask this? Orsted has been surprisingly kind, and I feel like I’m getting carried away.

"I... no, I shall—"

"You don’t have to be so formal."

"Yes, from now on, I will be... serving under you, Sir... Lord Orsted. Is that correct?"

"...Yes. As long as that is your intention."

"And, well... This is a very difficult thing to ask."

I glanced at Eris before speaking.

"Regarding employment conditions..."

"...Employment conditions?"

"Yes. Well, I have a wife and children, so I would greatly appreciate it if I could have some time off... to see my family, regularly."

Of course, once I officially start working, I’ll dedicate myself fully. But you know, sometimes you need to remind yourself why you're working, right? Watching Lucy grow, teaching Aisha and Norn, savoring Lilia’s cooking, basking in the sun with Mom, doing naughty things with Sylphie, doing naughty things with Roxy, doing naughty things with Eris... you get it.

"That’s up to you, Rudeus Greyrat."

"Ah, right."

I guess that’s a no. Sorry, Lucy. Dad’s going away to work.

Once I defeat the Man-God and save the world, I'll be back, so stay strong and grow up to be a good girl.

"But I am not Atofe. I do not intend to tear you away from the family you risked your life to protect. Nor do I plan to drag you around for years... at least, for now."

"Oh, really? That's a relief to hear."

Looks like I'll get some time off. Phew.

That's good. Being separated from everyone would be tough. I have to protect them, but I also want to be with them.

"Do you need anything else?"

Orsted's gaze was sharp. Could I really make a request? He didn't seem angry. No, no, it wouldn't be right to bring this up later. There's no contract, so I need to set things straight now.

"...Can I really ask for something?"

"I will accommodate as much as I can."

Seriously? Then... would it be okay to ask for a salary? It wouldn't be unreasonable. Money means responsibility. Paying someone means holding them accountable. Getting paid means taking responsibility. A job without money involved is just irresponsible work... or so I read in some manga.

I'm going to take responsibility for working under Orsted. As proof of that, wouldn't it be right for me to receive financial compensation from him?

"Uh, well... Since I won't be home, my family will lose a breadwinner. While I'm not exactly the biggest earner, but, uh... when I fought you Lord Orsted the other day, I, uh, spent quite a bit. And my savings... while I still have some, they're starting to run low. So while my absence means one less dish on the dinner table... well, we've got some growing kids at home, you see..."

"...So, money?"

"To put it simply, yeah, hehe."

I let out an awkward, self-deprecating laugh, and Orsted pulled something out of his coat. A short sword with an exquisitely decorated sheath. No, a short sword? He set it down on the table with a thud.

"This is one of the forty-eight magic swords crafted by the renowned master blacksmith of the Demon World, Julian Jalisco, from the bones of

the King of the King Dragons Kajakut. The magic sword ‘Yubiori – Eminence.’ If you sell it, you should be able to get around 100,000 Asura gold coins. Use it as your initial funds."

"O-Oh..."

100,000 Asura gold coins. In this world’s currency, one Asura gold coin is about 100,000 yen, so... uh, uh... Wait, that’s 10 billion yen!? That’s enough to live a lifetime in luxury. I could probably build a castle.

"Not enough?"

"N-No, of course not!"

This is bad. This guy is giving me something this valuable... just what does he expect me to do? Ah, right. He wants me to fight the Man-God. Be a hitman, huh? That’s kinda scary.

But still, even if it’s meant to be my initial funds, who in the world would actually buy a single sword for that amount of money? Would it be the Asura royal family? Am I supposed to squeeze the money out of Ariel’s siblings?

"Uh, but, you see... exchanging this for cash around here might be a bit difficult."

"Hmm... I see. That’s true. Then, perhaps this would be better."

Saying that, Orsted pulled out a leather pouch from his coat and placed it on the table. The sound it made as it landed was rough, like stones scraping together.

I reached for the pouch, picked it up, and looked inside—inside were numerous small, colorful, transparent stones.

Blue, red, green, yellow, black, and white ones too.

"Are these... gemstones?"

"Magic stones. They’re small, but I chose the ones with color. If you sell them to the Magic Guild, they should fetch a decent sum."

Colored magic stones. This many...

Unlike the magic sword, they wouldn’t buy me a castle, but I could probably live in luxury for at least ten years. Is it really okay for me to take this much? As I hesitated, I glanced at Orsted’s face.

"Do you need more?"

He’s still offering more!? No, but... taking any more would feel... kinda scary.

"No... for now, this should be enough."

Saying that, I pocketed both the short sword and the magic stones. Holding something this valuable felt oddly unsettling. Maybe I should let Eris carry the short sword for me...

"Now then, I will read this journal. What will you do?"

"Well, I guess I’ll wait."

"It will take an entire day."

"Ah... then, what should I do? The sun is still high... should we continue our conversation?"

"No, if you consider this journal important, I should read it first."

Important...? That’s hard to say. But I feel like it’s better for him to read it. Orsted can see the broad strokes of the future. If he compares it to my journal, he might be able to discern something.

"Then, I’ll head back for today and return tomorrow."

"Very well."

"...Will you stay here overnight?"

"Yes."

"Got it."

And so, I left the cabin and headed home for the time being.

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On the way back, Eris walked a step ahead of me in the evening glow.

Maybe because I had listened to so much complicated talk today, my head felt heavy. My tired brain wanted to think about only one thing—the perfect ass in front of me. Eris’ ass was incredible. The harmony of muscle and fat. Firm, yet plump. It had all the right curves. This... this was true

sexual appeal. Incidentally, Eris was wearing tight bottoms that clung to her ass.

Because of that, I could clearly see just how full and round it was. Were they spats? Leggings? You don’t see them much around here, but... what material was that? Some kind of leather? No, with that elasticity, it might be cloth.

I’d know if I touched it. Yes, I just need to touch it. If I touch it, even at the cost of a brief moment of unconsciousness, one of the world’s mysteries will be solved. Alright. Eris can use the Sword of Light. I’ll show her that I, too, can use the Touch of Light.

"Rudeus."

Suddenly, Eris turned around. I hastily lifted my face.

"...Rudeus... You’re still Rudeus, right?"

Her expression was its usual stern, frown-like look. I understood what she was referring to—about my reincarnation.

"Oh. I'm still me. Apparently, I have something called the Laplace Aspect mixed in, but that doesn’t mean I’m someone else."

"Then... nothing’s changed, right?"

"That’s right. I just learned some things I didn’t know before. Nothing has changed."

I neither apologized nor made excuses—I simply stated the truth. Had Eris been able to keep up with the conversation earlier? Had she understood it? For Orsted, reincarnation seemed to be an everyday concept, and since I had read plenty of sci-fi stories in my past life, I could grasp the idea somewhat. But if you had no prior knowledge and just heard what we discussed today, could you really understand it?

Well, Eris should be around twenty years old by now. She’s not at an age where she can afford to stay ignorant forever. Wanting her to always be a carefree fool is just my own selfish wish.

"Hmm."

Eris nodded, though it was unclear whether she understood or not, and then asked:

"Do you want me to keep this a secret from Sylphie and Roxy?"

"If possible, yeah. If anyone's going to tell them, I want it to be me."

As I said that, Eris took two or three quick steps forward before stopping.

The sun was setting right behind her, casting her silhouette in perfect contrast. Her beautiful figure stood out against the backlight, like a shadow painting. Her red hair, bathed in the evening glow, sparkled like rubies. With her sharp features and piercing gaze, she radiated an undeniable presence even in the dimming light. She was stunning.

"Then, hold my hand."

Eris extended her hand toward me. Without a word, I took it. Unlike Sylphie’s or Roxy’s, her hand was rough and calloused from years of sword training. But it was warm, strong, and wrapped around mine with a firm grip.

I squeezed it back tightly and started walking. For some reason, walking side by side with Eris again after so long made me feel genuinely happy.

And as I thought about how, starting tomorrow, a new life different from before would begin, my heart beat just a little faster.

To the First Mission
Volume 16 - Chapter 1

"....."

Orsted listened to the story in silence. He neither interjected nor questioned anything. He simply listened quietly.

"——That's all. Do you understand anything from it?"

When I asked, Orsted nodded.

"Yes, I understand exactly how he used you."

Oh. Really? As expected of Orsted.

"He used you to change history."

"History, you say?"

"A history that was never meant to change—a history determined by a strong fate."

"...Is that because my fate is strong?"

"That's right."

It seemed my "fate power" was strong enough to alter history.

"But, Lord Orsted, if you wanted to, you could change history too, couldn't you?"

"I could."

Orsted nodded, tapping the journal on the table with a tonk.

"But I don't understand why the Man-God would make such drastic changes to history."

"Isn't it simply to avoid his own death?"

"Do not take his words at face value."

"Oh, right. Understood."

Well, it's possible he was lying.

"However, there is one thing that is clear."

"And what is that?"

"The fact that, through these changes, the future is shaping into something convenient for him."

"I see."

After a brief pause, Orsted continued.

"Therefore, you must change history so that the future unfolds in a way that is convenient for me."

So, it's not about reverting things to the way they were. That makes sense. Things that haven't happened yet can't be called history. History is something that is made.

"That's quite roundabout."

"I am already acting with a hundred-year plan in mind. Everything that has happened and everything that will happen is merely a stepping stone for that. Of course, due to you and Nanahoshi, there's a lot that has gone out of track..."

A hundred years ahead... He's been working on this for a long time, so I guess he can't afford to suddenly change course now.

"Just to confirm, going straight to the Man-God's domain and taking him down together isn't an option, right?"

"Unless all the Sacred Treasures are gathered, we cannot reach him."

"And we can't gather them right away, can we?"

"We can obtain four of them, but the last one is in Laplace's possession. Laplace is set to resurrect about eighty years from now. ...I will be the one to collect the treasures. Do not act on your own."

Not that I could even if I wanted to. I don't even know where they are. From the journal, I recall that they were held by the Five Dragon Generals. But the only one whose location I know is Perugius. Wait... In that case, wouldn't the Mad Dragon King Kháos being dead be a problem?

"I heard that the Mad Dragon King Kháos has passed away. Is that going to be an issue?"

"I already retrieved his treasure."

I see. So he’s already taken care of that.

"But isn’t it possible that the Man-God has already predicted that we would try to change the future?"

"Hmm?"

"If we take action like this, isn’t there a chance we’ll just be digging our own grave?"

"No. In addition to his strong future sight, he likely possesses the ability to be unconditionally trusted by all living beings in this world... However, because of that, he is weak at handling irregularities."

Is that so? So the Man-God has some kind of “curse” too...

But wait—saying that he’s trusted it's a bit of a stretch, isn’t it? At the very least, I never trusted him... Hold on, I’m immune to Orsted’s curse. Does that mean I’m also immune to the Man-God’s curse? During our conversations, it did seem like he had trouble dealing with me. But then again, in the end, I did end up believing a lot of what he said. Maybe it’s not complete immunity? Could it be that one day, I’ll also come to fear Orsted?

No, Orsted’s information isn’t necessarily absolute. The idea that the Man-God is unconditionally trusted by all beings in this world might not even be correct. If I keep going down this rabbit hole, I won’t know what to believe anymore. Let’s stop overthinking it.

"Even if he struggles with predicting irregularities... do we really have a chance of winning?"

"We will win."

Orsted declared it with certainty.

"He is not omnipotent. We are just one step away."

That statement wasn’t directed at me. It was as if Orsted was reassuring himself. He truly believed in his victory. Even if things went poorly midway, he was determined to win in the end. That confidence was reassuring.

"For now, we will focus on changing the near future."

"The near future?"

"That’s right."

Ariel's Choice
Volume 17 - Chapter 4

"There's no need to worry."

That voice came from behind me.

I turned around in a hurry, and there he was—the silver-haired, golden-eyed demon... no, it was Orsted.

"If Ariel Anemoi Asura wishes to speak, I will not refuse."

Orsted's piercing gaze shot straight through Ariel. Ariel, struck by that gaze as if electrocuted, widened her eyes in shock, her legs trembling... And then—oh no. A puddle began spreading at her feet.

"Ah... ah..."

Her face twisted in terror, looking as if a nightmare had become reality. Well, this is bad. Looks like I'm officially a traitor now...

"Ahh..."

Just as I thought that, Ariel's expression changed to one of ecstasy.

Seeing that blissful look on her face, I thought— This might work.

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A while later, Ariel had regained her composure.

Now, she looked as if nothing had happened, keeping a composed expression. I washed her soiled pants and underwear with water magic, then dried them using my original mixed magic, Steam Dry, which combined wind and fire magic. It was a spell that rapidly dried fabric at the cost of damaging it—a technique banned in my household because Aisha would get mad whenever I used it. But given the emergency, I had no choice.

...Still, I never imagined that in my lifetime, I'd end up washing a princess' underwear. Turns out, even in this world, expensive underwear is made of silk...

While I was handling that, I let Ariel wear my robe. Long robes really do come in handy. Now, Ariel had changed back into her dried pants and underwear, once again maintaining her composed demeanor. Meanwhile, I

was wearing the robe that had been on a half-naked princess. It had a strangely nice scent, which was starting to get me a little too excited.

Not good. Maybe I've been too disconnected from anything lewd lately—seems like my gauge is getting full. I'll take care of that later. Self-discipline. While I was caught up in those thoughts, Orsted looked uncomfortable the entire time.

"I must apologize for my unsightly display, Lord Orsted."

"It’s fine."

With everything sorted, Ariel finally addressed Orsted. Her face was still slightly pale, but she wasn’t displaying any extreme fear toward him.

"....."

"Please, don’t make such a terrifying face."

"This is my normal face."

"Ah, so this is the effect of your curse?"

"That’s right."

Still, why had Orsted come out in the first place? Well, he’s the boss. I’ll just watch how this conversation unfolds.

"I see. I’ve met many Blessed Children and Cursed Children before, but... I can tell that your curse is in a league of its own."

"Yet, you seem to know how to overcome it."

"I am of the Asura royal family. Separating my emotions from my duty is second nature to me."

"Even so, deep down, you do not truly trust me."

"No, which is precisely why I wished for this conversation."

The tension between them made me feel increasingly uncomfortable. But I should probably listen carefully. Even though the scent from the robe was distracting me, I had to focus.

"Let me be direct. Lord Orsted, why are you willing to aid me?"

"Because the one behind Darius is my enemy."

"The one behind Darius... You mean my brother? First Prince Grabel?"

"No."

"Then who?"

Oof, tough question there, boss.

"An evil god who calls himself the God of the Humans... 'The Man-God'."

Oh wow, he actually said it. How much is Orsted planning to reveal? Ariel could still end up turning against us.

"The Man-God... You mean the Human God? As in one of the Creator Gods from the age of myth?" [36]

"Whether the Human God from the myths and the Man-God I'm fighting is the same, I do not know. But that's what he calls himself."

"And this God is working with Darius? For what purpose?"

"To kill you and put Grabel on the throne."

"Huh...?"

Ariel looked dumbfounded.

Then, still in that dazed state, she turned to face me.

"...I see. It's an absurd story, but judging from Lord Rudeus' face, it doesn't seem to be a lie."

Come on, is my face a lie detector now? Am I really that easy to read? I thought I was good at keeping a poker face...

Maybe I should ask Sylphie later—what does she think of my face? Would she say it's handsome...?

"But why would such a God support my brother? Is it because he is more suited to be king?"

"No. His reasons are more self-serving than that."

"May I ask what those reasons are?"

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[36] Ariel refers to the Man-God as one of the "Creator Gods", don't know if the story is fuzzy for her or if that's how the original 6 Gods are known to people.

Orsted glanced at me, his expression slightly difficult to read, before turning back to Ariel.

"Roughly a hundred years from now, the Asura Kingdom will face a great crisis."

"!"

"At that time, the kingdom's response will depend on whether you or Grabel is the reigning monarch."

Whoa, wait. I've never heard this before.

"If Grabel is king, he will attempt to overcome the crisis through military might. If you are queen, you will rely on magic."

"A hundred years from now... But we won't be alive then, will we?"

"It's about the policies set during your reign. Grabel will strengthen military forces, while you will enhance magical defenses."

Boss, I was not briefed on this.

"If the kingdom relies on military force, it will be destroyed. But if it relies on magic, it will survive."

"....."

"The Man-God wants Asura to be destroyed."

Could Orsted be lying? Telling Ariel what she wants to hear? ...But if she tries to verify it by looking at my face, wouldn't she be able to tell if it's a lie?

"Why does Man-God want Asura to be destroyed?"

"Because someone capable of playing a key role in defeating him will emerge from Asura."

"And that person is a threat to him?"

"Exactly."

Ariel seemed to accept the explanation.

"And you need that person?"

"That's right."

Ariel placed a hand on her chin, her expression pensive. Then, with a slightly troubled look, she glanced toward me.

"Stop. Don't look at me! Don't use me as a lie detector!"

No, I need to keep a poker face and support Orsted here.

"Well, that answer was so far from what I imagined that I find myself a bit bewildered. Should I believe you or not...?"

Looks like she thinks it’s a lie. Damn.

"You don’t need to believe me. But I will tell you what you want to know."

"What I want to know?"

Orsted spoke arrogantly, and Ariel looked surprised.

"Luke Notos Greyrat has not betrayed you. He is merely being manipulated by the Man-God."

The smile vanished from Ariel's face. That smile, which had been stuck on her face as if it were her default expression, was gone.

"Lord Rudeus said the same, but what do you mean by 'manipulated'?"

"The Man-God told him it was ‘for you own good’ and led him down the wrong path."

"Luke is a smart man despite how he may seem. Would he really be deceived so easily?"

"When people are given information that benefits them, they believe it easily."

Orsted never feeds me convenient information, though. But I suppose that's separate from whether people believe him.

"...It's a hard story to believe, but... Lord Rudeus, what do you think?"

She suddenly turned to me. Here we go again—back to playing the lie detector. But this is a good move. If Orsted was making a completely outrageous lie, and I couldn’t provide a consistent answer, she’d know right away that he was lying. But this, I can answer.

"I have been manipulated by the Man-God for a long time. He appeared in my dreams and repeatedly gave me advice that brought me short-term

gains. Thanks to that, I gained a lot. But in the end, it was all part of his plan to betray me when it mattered most. I followed his advice, trusted him, and was ultimately betrayed. In the end, I was even forced to fight Lord Orsted. I believe Luke is in a similar situation."

My voice came out smoother and more composed than I expected. Ariel listened with her expression unchanged, then turned to face Orsted. She started to speak but hesitated, shaking her head. Then, with a thoughtful expression, she pondered deeply.

"So... Luke is not actually on Darius' side, is that correct?"

"That's right. He has been unknowingly made to cooperate, but I doubt Luke himself is aware of it."

It took a long detour to get here, but in the end, what Ariel wanted to know most was about Luke.

More than whether Orsted was telling the truth or not...

"...Hearing that puts me at ease."

"You believe me?"

"If it weren't for this timing, I wouldn't have. However, there are things that make sense now. Like how Lord Rudeus kept glancing at Luke..."

Did I really glance at him that much?

"Honestly, the timing seems too perfect... but I'll take the risk and choose to believe you."

Ariel responded while glancing sideways at me. Leaving Orsted aside... does that mean she trusts me? That makes me happy, but it's also complicated.

"So, besides Luke, is there anyone else under the Man-God's influence?"

"Most likely, Darius."

"He would be the most effective choice, wouldn't he? Anyone else?"

"Possibly the North Emperor Auber or the Water God Reida. One of those two is likely an apostle."

"Apostles... are there only three of them?"

"Yes, no more than that."

"I see."

Ariel nodded.

"In other words, Lord Orsted and Lord Rudeus aim to fight those three apostles and stop the Man-God’s plans. Is that correct?"

"That's right. You catch on quickly."

"I take pride in being quite perceptive."

Ariel said it with confidence, but she wasn’t smiling. Her expression had been stiff this whole time.

"Then, Lord Orsted, I have a proposal."

"What is it?"

"Since our goals align, I am willing to follow your orders."

"...Even if you are willing, those around you won’t accept it."

"Then I simply won’t tell them. If no one knows I sold my soul to the devil, no one can complain."

"....."

Oh, Orsted looks a little hurt at being called a devil.

"I have no intention of being picky about methods if it ensures victory. The more strong allies we have, the better."

"...You don’t think I could be lying and planning to betray you in the end?"

"I am not foolish enough to let fear of risk make me miss an opportunity."

Lady Ariel, what you’re saying sounds cool, but I wonder if deep down, you feel like you’re swearing loyalty to an Evil Demon Lord. I felt the same way when I kneeled to Orsted. Though, to be fair, Orsted Corporation offers good benefits. Just because the boss looks like a villain doesn’t mean he treats his employees badly.

"So, Lord Orsted, if possible, I would like to take charge of Luke’s situation."

"Oh?"

"I would prefer Lord Rudeus to focus on fighting the Man-God's apostles while I handle Luke and the nobility. That way, we can both reduce our burdens and act more efficiently."

"...Very well. Then, I leave the matter of Luke to you. If possible, persuade him. If necessary, kill him."

"As you command."

Ariel kneeled before Orsted, and Orsted received it with his usual terrifying expression.

Ten Days in the Capital and the Truth About Orsted

Volume 17 - Chapter 12

The meeting room was a graveyard.

It was a graveyard for servants, located at the edge of a district lined with noble mansions.

That place alone was eerily devoid of people, a lonely island in the middle of town... and beneath it lay a burial chamber. A place that seemed like the kind where the undead would hold a sports festival at night. And within it lurked someone far more terrifying than the undead.

"You've arrived, Rudeus Greyrat."

"Yes, I have!"

Orsted was sitting on a coffin, resting his chin on his hand as he waited.

What a sacrilegious thing to do. I couldn't bring myself to sit on a coffin, so I used earth magic to create a table and chairs, then set up the candles I had brought.

"Here you go."

"Ah, thanks."

I offered the chair to my boss, then took a seat across from him.

Now, the meeting begins.

"First off, I should say: well done, Rudeus. With this, Ariel's ascension to the throne is certain."

"Certain? There's still some time before the king passes away, isn't there?"

The king was suffering from an incurable disease... or rather, he was dying of old age, but he still had time left. During that time, there were forces making desperate efforts to revive Grabel's momentum. If we let our guard down, they could trip us up—Ariel had said as much.

There were still sources of concern. Water King Isolte, who had witnessed her master's death right before her eyes. And there's the Boreas family, which had been colluding with Darius. Those two were ones we needed to be especially wary of. So I had assumed my next job would be to systematically crush those forces, but...

"No, with Perugius on her side and Darius defeated, Ariel's position as King is secured."

Orsted seemed certain of this. I didn't really understand, but in his mind, it was already decided.

"You look unconvinced, Rudeus Greyrat."

Oops, did that show on my face?

"No, Lord Orsted. I just think we still can't let our guard down."

"....."

Orsted's gaze pierced through me. No, really, it's not that I don't trust what my boss is saying, okay? I just mean, you know, it's not over yet...

"Well, I mean, there's still a chance your prediction could be wrong, right? This whole thing wrapped up rather smoothly, and it's possible the Man-God still has something up his sleeve, right? Maybe there's another twist coming?"

"There isn't. I can say that with certainty."

"....."

When he put it like that, I had no choice but to shut up. Orsted was still hiding something from me, but he wasn't going to tell me what it was.

"I guess it's only natural... I was once a pawn of the Man-God, after all. No way you would tell me everything..."

The words slipped out, unintended. A mistake. Hearing that, Orsted stood up. His piercing gaze bore down on me with terrifying intensity.

"Eep! I-I'm sorry! That's not what I meant! It's not that I'm unhappy about not being told, it's just..."

"Rudeus Greyrat. It's true—I hadn't fully trusted you."

I opened my Foresight Eye to its fullest, looking for an escape route. No good. I was surrounded by Orsted's afterimages. If I tried to flee, I'd be intercepted. No choice but to steel myself.

"I had considered the possibility that you might betray me and join the Man-God, so I've been keeping you under constant surveillance."

Surveillance. Well, of course. If Orsted had wanted to, he could have dealt with Auber, or anyone else, outside of my sight.

"But through this incident, you've proven that you're a man I can trust—not just in words, but in actions."

"....."

"Rudeus Greyrat, I owe you an apology. I lied to you."

Saying that, Orsted sat back down.

"Lied?"

I asked, and Orsted made a grim face. No, actually, it was just a difficult expression. This guy should really practice smiling a bit more. Smiling is key to communication, you know. Not that I'm great at it myself.

"Yes. Before, I told you that the first Dragon God developed a secret technique to fight the Man-God, one that granted me the power to see fate, as well as a method to remove myself from the laws of the world."

"Yes."

I recalled him saying something about being able to see a rough outline of someone's future.

"That was only half true. I don't actually have the power to see the future."

"...Huh."

"Then, does that mean the part about being removed from the laws of the world is true?"

"Yes. But tell me, Rudeus Greyrat—what do you think it means to be removed from the laws of the world?"

What does it mean...? Is there a hint somewhere? For example, the curse — Orsted's curse that causes people to instinctively hate him. No, that doesn't seem related.

"Mana recovery slows down drastically... but that's just a side effect, right?"

"Yes. My mana recovery is significantly slower, but in return, I'm immune to the Man-God's influence. But don't you find it odd? Why would the first Dragon God incorporate such a drawback into his secret technique?"

Why, indeed? Perhaps it was the only way to avoid the Man-God's interference? But then again, I don't seem to experience any such drawbacks while wearing Orsted's bracelet...

"The first Dragon God devised a technique that would guarantee his victory over the Man-God."

"....."

"That technique sacrifices mana recovery, but in exchange, it allows the user to start over from the beginning while retaining all their memories—no matter when or where they die."

"Start over...? So then, Orsted, you..."

"My start point is in the winter of year K330[37] in the Armored Dragon Calendar. In an unnamed forest in the northern Central Continent. From there, I have a 200-year window. If I haven't killed the Man-God by then, I'm forcibly returned to that point—no matter when I die."

A time loop. I had considered the possibility, but to think it was true...

"As absurd as it sounds, you've witnessed time travel yourself. You should be able to believe it."

"Yeah, well..."

My future self had gleaned hints about time travel from Dragonfolk ruins. The Dragonfolk possessed a secret technique that allowed them to reincarnate from the past into the future. If the Dragon God had developed a time-loop ability, it wouldn't be surprising. After all, even I had managed to come up with something similar.

"So, Lord Orsted, how many times have you restarted?"

"I stopped counting after a hundred."

Orsted spat out the words bitterly with a look of disgust in his face, like some ancient warlord. Let's see... 200 years per loop, over a hundred loops...

That's over 20,000 years! He's been looping for more than 20,000 years? That's dizzying...

"Through those countless loops, I've seen Ariel and Grabel's battle unfold many times. I know who is necessary, who isn't. What leads to Ariel's

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[37] The name of the calendar is "Kō ryū-reki" (甲龍暦). So that's why "K" it's used for short in many translations.

victory, and what leads to Grabel's. And at this point, there is no way for Grabel to turn the tides. Ariel's victory is absolute."

"Even if the Man-God intervenes?"

"Yes. The Man-God does not retain his memories between loops, so he doesn't realize I've been 'redoing' things. However, after I became aware of his existence and began my fight against him, he has intervened in battles like this many times. And in every single case, at a certain point—he withdraws."

"And that point is... now?"

"Exactly."

I see. Orsted's certainty came from experiencing this outcome countless times. But isn't there still a chance of an exception? Though, they say that people placed in the exact same circumstances will always act the same way. Exact circumstances are impossible to replicate, but I could understand that the likelihood of an exception was low.

"So, you can rest easy. Now that things have reached this point, Ariel will be King."

"Understood."

If he says so, then it must be true. My only concern is that despite all those loops, Orsted has yet to win.

"Lord Orsted... can you really defeat the Man-God?"

"Yes. I already know what's required to kill him and the necessary preparations. And this time, I have you. We're just one step away."

Then, I'll believe in his words. Whether Orsted can see the future or has lived through it countless times doesn't matter. I have no choice but to trust him.

I'll do my best—so I can protect my family.

Distant Lullaby Song

Tōku no Komori no Uta - 遠くの子守の唄

Spotify || YouTube

Let your first cry resound,
Announcing your birth to the world.
A gift bestowed from the heavens,
Among countless lives.

The child who sets the forest ablaze
Knows no peaceful nights in an embrace.
Exchanging power for fate,
Never to feel love's touch.

Sleep, sleep, to a mother's voice,
Entrusted to a lullaby.
Close, close, let curses fade,
Slumber on, never wake.

In a small town, a child is born,
A precious baby once again.
A gift bestowed from the heavens,
With wisdom to never know hunger.

From above the clouds,
A whim grants power—
What future will it bring?

Sleep, sleep, O child of God,
To ward off misfortune.
So that you never drift
From the hearts of humankind, sleep.

Accept your fate.
Tears fall from every eye alike.

Sleep, sleep, my precious child.
No matter your form or shape,
I love you. I love you.

Rest easy and sleep, sleep, sleep.

Signs of Family Collapse
Volume 18 - Chapter 5

Ten days had passed since then.

I had been staying overnight at our company's office, completely absorbed in my training.

When Orsted was around, my routine consisted of physical training in the morning, mock battles in the afternoon, theory lessons in the office at night, and cleaning up the room and sorting documents before bed.

On the days Orsted was away, I trained alone. I donned my Magic Armor and practiced the forms Orsted had taught me until I was utterly exhausted while also experimenting with new ways to improve my coordination.

Sometimes, Sylphie would stop by with a packed lunch and help me refine my coordination, but today, I was on my own.

Now, about the forms I was practicing—they were apparently developed by the Dragon God Urupen four hundred years ago. The Dragon God Urupen.

In the world at large, he was known as one of the Three Heroes Who Slayed the Demon God. A colleague of Perugius, in other words.

According to Orsted, Urupen had the lowest mana reserves among all the Dragon Gods in history.

Among the candidates for Dragon God at the time, he was considered the weakest—so much so that no one believed he would ever inherit the title.

Yet, he developed a completely new and unique school of Dragon God Style for combat. And with that Dragon God Style, he not only earned the title of Dragon God but also defeated Demon God Laplace.

Even now, he was revered as "The Greatest Genius in History."

Urupen's Dragon God Style[38] was designed to minimize mana usage as much as possible, allowing the user to corner their opponent with minimal effort.

Orsted had discovered Urupen's secret manuscripts and successfully mastered his combat techniques, including the ultimate skill...

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[38] As we have seen through Rifujin's Blogs, "The Dragon God Style" was a fighting style made by Laplace and improved by Urupen. And the current "Dragon God" is the strongest warrior of that style. Similar as the Sword God, North God or Water God.

“The Holy Dragon’s Battle Aura.” [39]

For me, the idea of fighting without using mana wasn’t particularly necessary. However, the concept of overwhelming an opponent with minimal effort was invaluable. Moreover, a combat style that fused magic and martial arts suited me well, especially when using the Magic Armor.

Now, back to my coordination training.

First up—Stone Cannon. My Stone Cannon was powerful enough to wound even Orsted if it landed a direct hit. It was an extremely high-powered spell—on par with the Sword of Light of the Sword God Style. That’s why I built my strategy around it. Next was Quagmire. Since I had used it so many times, it had become one of my fastest-casting spells. The key was to be able to accurately place it at the feet of a fast-moving opponent. That way, it could serve as the starting point of an attack.

Then there was Electric. It took slightly longer to cast compared to Quagmire, but its ability to bypass battle aura and paralyze an opponent made it extremely effective. Even against enemies resistant to Quagmire, Electric could still work. In those situations, it was best used right after Quagmire failed. Once the enemy’s movement was hindered, I could use spells like Deep Mist or Frost Nova to throw them further off balance.

For offense, Stone Cannon alone would suffice. Everything else was purely for restraining or restricting the enemy’s movements. The key was to put them in a position where they couldn’t dodge or deflect the attack. Then, finish them off with Stone Cannon. If I could set up that pattern, victory would be nearly guaranteed—no matter who the opponent was.—Or so Orsted had told me.

The most important thing was to establish a routine. With a solid routine in place, I could react instantly, even if the enemy did something unexpected.

Quagmire → enemy action → counter spell → enemy reaction → further counter spell—I had to repeat this pattern until they were completely trapped, then land the final Stone Cannon.

...Yup, easier said than done.

In practice, swordsmen could slice through magic, and there was always the risk of getting hit first. Not to mention, support magic could easily be nullified. It wasn’t going to be easy.

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[39] The name of “Ryuushou Touki” (龍聖闘気), implies that Urupen was part of the Holy Dragon Clan, the same as Szilard who developed barrier magic and defensive spells. Now, contrary to Dragon Aura or “Tatsuki” (龍気). This one does use “Tou” (闘) as part of the name. Which makes me believe it’s a combination of Battle Aura (闘気) and Dragon Aura.

Speaking of magic, Orsted had also taught me various king-tier spells and above. However, the results weren't particularly impressive. Apparently, most king-tier and higher offensive magic was merely enhanced versions of mixed saint-tier spells.

For example, the Water Emperor-tier Magic: Absolute Zero was essentially an upgraded, high-speed version of Frost Nova, which itself was a fusion of Water Splash and Icicle Field. Instead of going through the process of wetting the area with Water Splash first, Absolute Zero instantly froze a wide area in one go. And I could already do that. In other words, I had already mastered emperor-tier magic without realizing it.

That's why Badigadi had said my Stone Cannon was strong enough to be considered Earth Emperor-tier. Technically speaking, there wasn't an official spell to enhance Stone Cannon, but the principle was the same. Having mastered saint-tier spells across four elements, I had essentially learned every offensive magic spell in existence.

That said, God-tier magic was probably beyond my reach. Using God-tier magic required immense mana reserves, incredibly intricate control, lengthy incantations, and a complex magic circle to regulate it all.

According to Orsted, the power of God-tier magic was enough to reshape the world's landscape. In fact, some of this world's bizarre geographical features were remnants of such spells.

To be honest, I was still bad at drawing magic circles, and I didn't really need to use magic on such a massive scale. For now, I would stick to the fundamentals—basic, applied, and mixed magic. Step by step, I would solidify my foundation. That was the key.

"Rudeus."

Just as I was practicing my magic, Orsted returned. I immediately turned toward him and bowed my head.

"Welcome back, sir!"

"Hmm."

It was only natural for an employee to bow when the boss arrived at work. As I wiped the sweat from my forehead, I bent at a perfect forty-five-degree angle. It was a bit lonely being the only one here, but I had to endure until Cliff completed his research. Someday, when we had more employees, I wanted them all to bow in unison when the boss arrived. I didn't care if people called it a black company—that was the dream.

"I have a job for you."

At first, Orsted had told me to "just act normal," but by now, he had gotten used to it.

"You'll depart in three days. I'll explain the details now."

"I humbly accept this mission!"

I had received a direct order from Orsted himself.

Looked like my next job was decided.

"It's nothing major, as usual. But... make sure to say your goodbyes to your family before you leave."

"Yes, sir!"

And with that, I decided to return home for a bit.

After the Battle
Volume 19 - Chapter 11

"By the way, Randolph. You mentioned that you knew about the Man-God, right?"

At the very least, I should ask while I still remember.

Anyone who knows about the Man-God is valuable in their own right. After coming all this way, letting Pax die, and achieving nothing, I would be too pathetic if I left empty-handed.

"Yes, though I don't know much."

"Still, may I ask what you do know?"

"You may... but all I've heard is that one of my relatives, long ago, borrowed the power of the Man-God to fight against a powerful enemy."

"A powerful enemy...?"

"In order to protect his fiancée, he followed the Man-God's suggestion, stole the Fighting God Armor, wore it, and fought. His opponent was none other than Dragon God Laplace, who was considered the strongest at the time. In the end, he failed to protect his fiancée, and the fight ended in near mutual destruction."

Randolph added at the end, "Though it sounds rather dubious," and chuckled.

But that story... I had heard it somewhere before. That's right, Kishirika and Orsted had mentioned it. Something about the Dragon God and the Fighting God having fought...

"When I was young, I often would hear that story over drinks. It's probably just a fabrication... but because I grew up hearing it, the name 'Man-God' stuck with me."

No, this is valuable information.

In a way, it's a story about a former apostle of the Man-God. Well, Orsted probably already knows about it. But a little redundancy in information shouldn't be a problem.

"What was your relative's name?"

"The Demon King of the Biegoya region—Badigadi."

Ah. Well... in that case, the story really might be dubious.

That Demon King was a boisterous and carefree person. It wouldn't be surprising if he made up such a tale. I can't imagine Orsted lying, but... well, claiming someone else's heroic deeds as their own is a common enough story.

"Thank you..."

Coming Home and Making Reports

Volume 22 - Chapter 1

For now, it was Death God, Atofe, and Sword God—in that order. I wanted to reach out to more people. Preferably, some of the top-tier Seven Great Powers... The upper ranks of the Seven Great Powers were: the Technique God, the Dragon God, the Fighting God, and the Demon God. Aside from the Dragon God, the rest were either sealed away or missing. Wait...

"Speaking of which... isn't the Technique God a potential ally? Since he split from Demon God Laplace, wouldn't he be willing to cooperate in a fight against the Man-God?"

"It's pointless."

"Is it because his memories are hazy? In that case, maybe we could fuse him back with Demon God Laplace to restore his sanity—oh, but then Perugius might get mad. Maybe if we handle it carefully..."

"Stop."

The sheer force of Orsted's words shut me up instantly.

"I have no intention of making 'them' my allies."

Them... That one word made things clearer for me.

Orsted saw both Laplace and Perugius as the same. And likely, the same applied to the Five Dragon Generals as well.

"But, um... Perugius won't stay quiet with anything related to Laplace, right?"

"If he turns against us, I will deal with him myself."

"...Understood."

I could sense Orsted's unwavering resolve. Despite being unaffected by Orsted's curse, Perugius and Orsted had never formed any sort of close relationship. And now, this outright rejection. There weren't many possible conclusions. Still, I hesitated to ask. For some reason, I couldn't bring myself to. I shouldn't ask. "Is the 'Dragonfolk's Hidden Treasure' that leads to the Man-God actually the lives of the Five Dragon Generals?" I feel like if I asked that and were to get an answer, either Perugius or Orsted—or perhaps both—would become my enemies. I owed both of them too much. I didn't want to be caught in the middle. For now, it is better to remain ignorant.

"Then... let's move on to the next topic."

"Yeah."

I decided to change the subject. Pushing the issue would do no good. I was Orsted's subordinate. I had to follow his decisions.

"After this recent operation, I realized something... Lord Orsted, I feel like you lack a certain 'authority'."

"That's because I don't have any."

Ehh, that's not true at all... I'd like to say that, but technically speaking, the Seven Great Powers were more like Olympic gold medalists—exceptionally strong individuals, sure, but they didn't necessarily hold positions of authority. That said, the names of the Seven Great Powers carried weight. Even though most people had forgotten about them, those in power still recognized their significance.

The reason was simple—the North God, the Sword God, and others who stood at the peak of martial arts prowess were among them. Many nations hired swordsmen from these schools as instructors or bodyguards. Given their strength and utility, Orsted's position as the Second of the Seven Great Powers held significant meaning. That's why I wanted to capitalize on it.

"So, I have a proposal."

"...What is it?"

"I've gotten used to calling myself the 'Right Hand of the Dragon God,' but... it doesn't seem to instill fear in people. They don't really grasp the weight of 'Dragon God.' So... would it be okay if I called myself 'Dragon King'? Something easy to understand—like 'Mud Dragon King' or something."

The thing is, while Orsted wasn't widely known, Perugius was famous. If people saw me as Perugius' equal, they'd get the idea quickly. Even if it was just in name.

"No."

...Huh?

"I will not allow you to call yourself 'Dragon King.'"

He was glaring at me. A serious glare. I could tell. I could feel it. This was a look I had never seen before. This was... anger.

An intense, overwhelming fury. My legs started trembling.

"They lived solely for whatever they wanted, clinging to their insignificant pride... and died over a worthless conflict."

"....."

"You are nothing like them. That is why you will not use their title, Rudeus Greyrat."

"A... ah... yes, sir."

I hadn't expected such a strong rejection. I thought he'd just say, 'You can call yourself whatever you want.' Damn, my legs wouldn't stop shaking.

"Tch..."

"Eris, stop!"

Eris had clicked her tongue and was about to step forward, but I held her back. It's okay. This isn't a fight. It's not a falling out.

I just made a suggestion that went completely against the boss' vision, and he got mad. So, Eris, please stop lowering your stance and reaching for your sword handle.

"My suggestion was out of line. I apologize."

"Forget it."

As soon as I bowed, the pressure disappeared. Even for Orsted, who operated with loops in mind, there were things he refused to compromise on. I had just stepped right into one of those.

Well, whatever. A title wasn't that important. Authority could come from other sources. I might not be able to build my own presence just yet, but for now... I could borrow influence.

For instance—Ariel. The power of the Asura Kingdom.

Yeah. That seemed like a good angle to take.

Imprisoned in Fort Necross

Volume 22 - Chapter 8

★Rudeus★

"Excuse me."

A voice called out from behind me. Turning around, I saw Moore standing there. Thank goodness. A sensible person has arrived.

"You seem to be confused."

"Yes."

"I will explain. But first, please have a seat."

I did as he suggested and sat down on an overly girlish-looking chair. It seemed to be made of high-quality materials or had particularly plush cushions because it felt quite comfortable. Still, it was a bit too small for me—as if it were meant for someone much smaller... perhaps a teenage girl.

As soon as I sat down, Moore poured tea from a luxurious-looking teapot into an equally ornate teacup. The kind you'd expect royalty to use—something you'd see in Ariel's room back at the Asura Kingdom's royal palace. But the liquid inside was different.

It was murkier than regular tea, with a slightly bitter color. What is this...? No, wait—I recognize this. It's Sokas tea. The same tea Nanahoshi drinks regularly. Though, I doubt she drinks it because she likes it.

"Oh, thank you. I'll have some."

That said, for me, it's just regular tea. Might as well enjoy it.

"Now then, where should I begin?"

"If possible, please explain everything from the beginning."

"From the beginning...?"

Moore paused for a moment, as if gathering his thoughts. Then, as if recalling something, he began to speak.

"Lady Atofe was born near the end of the First Human-Demon War."

"Huh. So even Lady Atofe was once a child."

"Yes. Lady Atofe’s mother was said to be an intelligent woman, much like Lord Badigadi."

"Wait... if she was like Badigadi, she was considered intelligent?"

I suppose that’s the standard for the Immortal Demon Clan...

"Lord Badigadi greatly respected Lady Atofe’s mother. Meanwhile, Lady Atofe herself grew up idolizing her father—Lord Necross Lacross, the Immortal. At the time, Lord Necross Lacross was revered as the strongest Demon King."

Necross Lacross, the Immortal. One of the Five Great Demon Kings during the First Human-Demon War. There isn’t much information on him, but he was said to be absurdly powerful.

"However, that very same Necross Lacross was slain by the Hero Ars. I was not yet born at the time, so I do not know how he managed to slay an Immortal King. And neither does Lady Atofe who was still a child then. But she remembers one thing clearly—that upon witnessing that battle, she resolved to become a powerful and great Demon King herself."

I see. She wanted to become like her father, even though he had passed away. She may seem to think nothing at all, but in her own way, she acts with purpose and ambition. I've met quite a few Demon Kings, but Atofe is by far the most "Demon King-like" among them. A symbol of violence and fear—if I had to describe her, that’s the closest fit.

"However, we of the Immortal Demon Clan do not dwell on the past. His majesty, Lord Necross Lacross was indeed a great king, but over time, no one could remember what exactly made him great."

Ah, I see. Atofe wanted to become like her father, but she had no idea what that actually meant. That sounds just like her. And it seems her father was the same way. Or perhaps, it's simply a trait of their entire race. Even her father, despite being a great Demon King, left no records of his deeds.

Humans, in contrast, would have gone out of their way to document and exaggerate their achievements. But the Immortal Demon Clan—they live for so long that they never bother recording history. They don’t look back. They might not have even had the concept of keeping records. I can’t call that foolish. To be immortal is to live a long life and not dying means there’s no need to fear death. With no natural enemies, there’s no reason to learn from the past. So, of course, they wouldn’t preserve written records.

"Now, Sir Rudeus, let me ask you a question."

"Yes?"

"What do you believe a Demon King to be? How are they depicted in human legends?"

"A Demon King, huh..."

In this world, a Demon King is simply a ruler of a Demon territory. But that's only because I have some knowledge of the Demon Continent... A typical human perspective, as told in the Asura Kingdom or the Kingdom of Ranoa, would be something like this:

"A Demon King is an overwhelmingly powerful being, a natural enemy of humanity, and—oh, also someone who occasionally kidnaps princesses... ah..."

"Exactly."

So that's how it is.

"After the death of His Majesty Necross Lacross, Lady Atofe, not knowing what it meant to be a great Demon King, sought knowledge from humanity and had various historical records collected."

"The way you phrase it makes it sound like Atofe read those records herself..."

"Of course not. It was the Royal Guard at the time who read them."

Yeah, I figured.

"In the collected texts, there were numerous descriptions of different Demon Kings. And among them, those who were called 'Great Demon Kings' all had certain traits in common."

"Common traits...? Which are?"

"Exactly what you just described."

An overwhelmingly powerful being, A natural enemy of humanity, and—someone who kidnaps princesses. And then, of course, they are defeated by the hero who comes to rescue the princess.

"Didn't that seem suspicious?"

"I was not yet born at the time, and most of Lady Atofe's subordinates knew little about humans. Moreover, even within the Demon's own records, similar stories existed. Of course, such records were not left by the

Immortal Demon Clan, but there were mentions of a certain Demon King who kidnapped a princess and was slain by the Hero Ars."

Ah, I see. So that's how it happened.

The Hero Ars.

A legendary figure from the First Human-Demon War—he traveled with six companions, slaughtered the Five Great Demon Kings, and even defeated Kishirika, putting an end to a thousand years of conflict. Indeed, one of his many tales includes the classic story: "He defeated a Demon King, rescued a princess, married her, and founded the Asura Kingdom." But the reality was different. According to the historical records I read at the Boreas House, Ars never set out to save a princess—and in fact, the Demon King never kidnapped one either. One human nation, as part of a diplomatic strategy, had offered its princess as a hostage to the Demon King.

Ars, completely unrelated to this, attacked the Demon King's castle, slew the Demon King, and as a result, the princess was freed. That was the whole story. But in later years, writers didn't record it that way.

Instead, various storytellers rewrote the tale, depicting Hero Ars' battle to rescue the princess in a dramatic fashion. Perhaps it was a lack of historical knowledge. Or maybe they intentionally created fictional stories...

Either way, different stories assigned the role of the princess-kidnapping Demon King to different figures, changed the names of the princesses and kingdoms, and altered historical events to fit their narratives.

If you took all these stories as fact, then:

- All Five Great Demon Kings kidnapped princesses.
- All of them were defeated by heroes.
- And each time, Ars 'enjoyed a passionate night' with a different princess.
- Meaning the first queens of Asura Kingdom would have been... quite numerous.

And... Atofe believed all of it.

She genuinely thought:

"This is what a hero is."
"This is what a princess is."
"And this is what a Demon King must be."

"I see... So there's actually a reason why Lady Atofe has such a violent personality."

"No, that's just how she was born."

"Oh... I see."

So, she was always a manifestation of violence. That never changed.

"Lady Atofe is just that kind of person. She conveniently interpreted the concept of a Demon King in her own way."

Or rather, she ignored all the inconvenient parts and focused only on what suited her idea. And so, from that misguided interpretation, the Immortal Demon King Atoferatofe—the symbol of terror—was born.

Well... it actually worked out fine.

There are plenty of humans out there who fear Atofe.

"But... based on this, does that mean the reason I was brought here is...?"

"Because you called yourself a princess."

"...So this is my own fault"

"Even as a joke, you shouldn't have said something like that."

Aluche, Town of the Sky Continent

Volume 23 - Chapter 3

The next day, we set off.

The Town of Aluche[40] was located northeast of our current position.

From here to Aluche, there was nothing but a vast, open plain, with barely any landmarks—at least, it seemed that way at first glance. But in reality, there was something.

Long ago, a hero traveled through this land and crossed the Celestial Continent. During the Laplace War, he climbed up from the Demon Continent side, obtained a hidden secret technique, and made a significant contribution to the war effort. Anticipating that he might die before fulfilling his ambitions, he left behind markers leading to the secret technique he had discovered.

...That hero was Perugius, by the way.

In this continent, where trees were sparse and the grass was short, the markers stood out. When morning came and I looked around, I could immediately think, "Oh, there's something over there."

Upon closer inspection, the markers turned out to be pillars.

They were likely created using earth magic, standing about a meter and a half tall, with a width just wide enough for two hands to wrap around. The top was weathered and crumbling. Looking from above, the pillars weren't circular but shaped like a droplet. The pointed end of the droplet indicated the direction of the town.

That's what was written in "The Legend of Perugius."

Only those who had read that book would recognize the markers. As expected of the trial set by Perugius, his writings were filled with hints. ...Well, I doubt Perugius himself actually wrote that book, though.

These pillars were scattered around the outskirts of the town, so as long as we kept walking, we were bound to find one eventually. By following them, we would reach the town sooner or later.

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[40] The name is (アルーチェ), just like a town in Madrid, Spain.

Naming
Volume 23 - Chapter 4

"Sylphie."

With that thought, I exchanged glances with Sylphie. She took a sharp breath for a moment, but then, as if making up her mind, she took a deep breath and handed Sieg over to Sylvaril.

Sylvaril gently cradled Sieg, wrapping him in both her hands and wings. Then, she walked over to Perugius and knelt before him. With great reverence, she presented Sieg to Perugius. Perugius, seated upon the altar, studied the infant closely.

"Hmm... Green hair, slightly pointed ears. Eyes like a piercing flash of light, yet he has a gentle impression. A fine child."

I think so too...

But for some reason, my heart was pounding. Depending on the result of this baptism, Sieg might be revealed to be Laplace—and if that happened, would he be killed on the spot? I trust Perugius, but I can't help but be afraid... Maybe I should keep my Foresight Eye active.

What I saw in my Foresight Eye was Perugius scooping up water with one hand. And a second later, that vision became reality. Perugius lifted water with one hand, then clasped it with the other, crushing it between his palms. He clenched both fists and pressed them against his shoulders in a ceremonial pose. After holding that position for a few seconds, he slowly opened his hands and touched Sieg's cheek.

"In the name of I, Perugius, the Armored Dragon King, I bestow my blessing upon this infant, an egg of mankind. By my hand, I perform this baptism, and in my name, I grant you a name. May he break through his shell in good health, grow strong, wise, and kind. The name of this child shall be... 'Saladin'."

Perugius' hand—or rather, the water that had dampened Perugius' hand—glowed faintly yellow.

The water shone for a moment before fading away. Once Perugius confirmed this, he lifted the infant and returned him to Sylvaril.

Sylvaril received the child with the utmost reverence, holding him gently as she stood. Then, slowly, she returned to Sylphie and presented Sieg back to her. Sylphie, looking a little dazed, took Sieg into her arms.

Out of curiosity, I peeked at Sieg's face. There didn't seem to be any changes. He still had that soft, newborn look, staring at me and Sylphie with his innocent eyes. His hair remained green. What does this mean?

"...Uh?"

"Hmph."

Perugius let out a snort, then stood up and slowly walked over to me. And then, when he was right in front of me, he spoke—delivering a shocking statement.

"I do not know what foolish misunderstanding you had, but I already discerned that this child is not Laplace."

For about five seconds, I couldn't comprehend what he was saying.

"...Oh. Is that so?"

"Arumanfi is my eyes. There is no way I would mistake Laplace. The shade of his green hair is vastly different from Laplace's. His eye color is different. His mana pool is nothing significant. And most of all, that accursed aura is absent—that wretched curse that shakes one's very soul."

So... that means, from the moment he witnessed the birth, he already knew Sieg wasn't Laplace?

"Since you were so persistently concerned about it, I allowed you to come to this shrine. This water changes color when touched by certain individuals. If he were Laplace... it would have glowed red."

"...But it did turn yellow."

"I would not go so far as to call him a Blessed Child... but he does carry a strong trace of Laplace's Aspect. Has he not been unusually strong for his age? More robust than expected?"

"That... he has."

Now that he mentioned it, Sieg did seem unusually strong for a newborn. So that's what it was. Well, having a healthy body is a good thing.

Either way, he's not Laplace.

I breathed a sigh of relief.

The Second Eye
Volume 23 - Chapter 10

Then, at a certain moment, Kishirika's eyes stopped moving.

"Found him."

It was almost instantaneous.

"The eastern edge of the Northern Lands, in the Biheiril Kingdom. Deep in a forest there, he is speaking with someone... My, what an evil face he has..."

Kishirika let out a mischievous laugh as she leaned in further.

"Now then, who is he speaking with... Hm?"

Suddenly, Kishirika's expression darkened.

"I can’t see them anymore."

With a serious expression, completely different from before, she closed her eyes. She tilted her face toward the sky as if resting her sight. But after a short while, she slowly opened her eyes again.

"This feeling... I see. You are fighting against the Man-God, aren’t you?"

Her presence was completely different, exuding a calm air like another person entirely.

"Yes."

"If you are fighting the Man-God, then that means... you have sided with the Dragon God, right?"

"...Yes."

"Hmm..."

Kishirika folded her arms and lowered her chin, assuming a dramatic thinking pose. A few seconds later, she looked up at the sky, as if gazing at the moon. Though it was midday, the sky was clear, with only the clouds drifting by.

"So, Atofe. You have chosen to side with this man?"

"I have."

"I see... so perhaps this too is fate."

There was none of her usual playful attitude. She seemed like a true sage. What happened to her? Did the donut go down the wrong way...?

"Lady Kishirika, do you know about the Man-God?"

"Indeed. I have a history with him... To be honest, I never wanted to be involved with him again."

"A history?"

"Nothing too dramatic. Just that about 4,200 years ago, I was used. Both I and Badi were deceived by the Man-God, who wanted to kill Laplace."

4,200 years ago...?

Ah, that was around the time of the Second Human-Demon War.

"I recall hearing that the Fighting God and the Dragon God fought."

"That's right. Badi donned the Fighting God Armor to protect me and fought the Demon Dragon King Laplace."

"Wait... His majesty Badigadi?"

Was this a shocking revelation? So, the Fighting God's true identity was Badigadi...? Orsted never told me that. But I feel like I've heard it somewhere before... Oh, right, Randolph! So that story was true... It was always hard to tell if that old man was serious or not.

"The Fighting God Armor has been lost for a long time... but if Badi appears, be cautious. He still feels indebted to the Man-God, so he may end up as your enemy."

"...I see."

I have no desire to fight that cheerful Demon King. But I have to consider the possibility that he may turn against me... If possible, I'd prefer he'd just forget any debts and join my side.

"Well, if you managed to recruit Atofe, I'm sure you can handle Badi as he is now. But if you can, try not to kill him."

Badigadi was Atofe's younger brother and Kishirika's fiancé. He was family. Demons may be open-minded, but even they wouldn't sit quietly if one of their own were killed.

"I understand. Though, I doubt he's someone who can be killed so easily."

"Indeed. The Immortal Demons are persistent, if nothing else."

Kishirika glanced at Atofe as she spoke. Atofe gave a smug look. But I don't think she was actually praising her.

"Now then... come a little closer."

Kishirika beckoned me. I stepped forward. She brought her hand close to her mouth. Was she about to whisper something?

"Even closer."

"What is—"

"Here, take this!"

Suddenly, Kishirika shoved her finger into my left eye. A sharp pain shot through me.

"Guuaaaahhh!!!"

I instinctively tried to recoil, but she grabbed my hair, preventing me from escaping. Even while wearing the Magic Armor 'Mk. II Kai',[41] why couldn't I break free?! It hurts, it hurts! Ah, but this... maybe I don't need to resist.

"Oh? You've calmed down now."

I accepted Kishirika's actions. The pain remained, a piercing sensation running through my brain. She had suddenly thrust her finger in and was now twisting it around, but I knew what she was doing. After all... this was the second time.

"It's done."

Finally, Kishirika's finger popped out. The lingering pain in my eye, the sensation of blindness. But I knew very well that I had not lost my vision.

"My rule is to offer a gift in exchange for something delicious."

"....."

"This is the second one."

Holding my aching eye, I knelt before Kishirika.

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[41] The Kanji "Kai" (改) is used for "Enhanced".

"I will not interfere in this battle, but I do have some small grudge against the Man-God. Therefore, consider this a special service that I will give you as a gift."

I removed my hand.

My vision was doubled. It was as if a hand was covering one of my eyes, showing me a completely different image. I could already feel a headache coming on.

"The Eye of Distant Sight. It is an eye that sees far distances, nothing more, but it should be useful."

The Eye of Distant Sight, huh?

I immediately closed my right eye and focused my magic into my left, adjusting it just as I did for my foresight eye, and looked into the distance. From the audience chamber, I could see the entrance of Necross Fortress.

There, a figure in black armor had removed his helmet and was scratching the top of his head. I focused my gaze further and poured in more mana. My vision soared through the sky, like an infinitely zooming camera, continuing to fly onward. A crater came into view. Within the crater, there was a town.

But I couldn’t see the entire town. I tried focusing even further. But my vision stopped at a mountain. The fine patterns on the mountain's stones and the sight of a yawning Great Tortoise could be seen, but that was the limit. If there was an obstacle in a straight line, the vision was blocked there. When I stopped channeling mana, my sight immediately returned to its original place. It was simply the ability to see far away. It wasn’t overwhelmingly powerful, and it seemed difficult to use, but there were likely many ways to put it to good use.

"If it's you now, you should be able to use two magic eyes simultaneously."

"Thank you."

I expressed my gratitude honestly.

"Indeed. Now then, Rudeus! If you ever find yourself in trouble again, rely on me! As long as it doesn't involve the Man-God, I shall aid you!"

Kishirika snapped open her shackles, chopped through the chain attached to her foot, and then, with a loud sound, threw off her blue-striped pajamas, revealing her usual bondage outfit.

Then, she made a great leap.

"Farewell! To—Buh!?"

Kishirika landed face-first. Atofe had firmly grabbed her foot.

"Wait."

"What is it? How dare you interrupt my ultra-cool exit scene?"

Kishirika glared at Atofe, blood streaming from her nose. Atofe, unbothered, looked down at her.

"Grant my request as well."

"What? I have no intention of listening to the request of someone who suddenly captured me and threw me in a cell. Let go! Shoo, shoo!"

Kishirika wiped her nosebleed while waving Atofe's hands away. However, Atofe paid no mind and grabbed Kishirika by the collar. Her bondage outfit stretched tight, revealing the tips of her meager chest. Oh! No, no, Rudeus the Celibate won't be tempted by something like this... Guh!

"Tell me where Al and Alek are. Rudeus needs strong allies, doesn't he? Those two should be perfect."

"Eh, I already gave Rudeus a reward... I even gave him a Demon Eye as a special service... I can't give more than that."

Al and Alek. Those were, if I recall, the nicknames for the Second and Third North Gods. That's how those close to them referred to them. I wondered if I had mentioned to Atofe that I couldn't find them, but thinking about it, Atofe was related to them, so it probably just came out naturally.

"Tell me."

"I—refuse!"

However, Kishirika showed no sign of complying.

Even though I now knew Geese's whereabouts, I had no idea what he was plotting. At this point, I felt the need to gather as many allies as possible, even if it meant forcing the issue. The more allies, the better. (Forcing the issue...?) Right. I had this. I remembered the ominous skull ring on my finger. Randolph's ring.

"Lady Kishirika. Lady Kishirika. Please look at this."

"Oh? What’s that? It looks familiar... Where did I see it before...? I have a bad feeling about this."

"It’s ‘Randolph’s ring.’"

"Hm... Randolph! I remember now! That’s his ring!"

Kishirika's reaction was dramatic. To be precise, her face turned completely pale.

"I see, I see, so it's his ring... That guy helped me a lot... really helped me a lot... But why did he always smile and say, ‘No need for thanks, just remember it for later, heh heh heh’...? Every time I saw that smile, I trembled in fear, wondering what he would ask for in return..."

"This clears that debt, doesn’t it?"

"Is that so!? Alright, alright, wait just a moment!"

Kishirika once again rolled her eyes up into the air. It only took a few seconds. A convenient search engine indeed.

"I can’t find Al. He’s likely in Asura, but either he’s in an area dense with mana, or he’s using some form of anti-Demon Eye technique, because his presence is blurry. Alek is walking along a highway... His direction suggests he’s headed towards the Biheiril Kingdom."

"I see. Then this works out well. Rudeus. When you reach the Biheiril Kingdom, search for a man named Aleksander. He should be of use to you."

"Understood."

The North God, Kalman III, is in the Biheiril Kingdom? Where Geese is? A coincidence...? No, knowing the Man-God, he probably expected Kishirika to locate Geese. Which means... it’s a trap. Yeah, definitely a trap.

"Alright, that’s everything, right? I’m leaving now! Feet, check! Hips, check! Shoulders, check! No one grabbing me? Then, farewell! Fwahahaha! Fwahahaha! Fwahaha-fwahaha-fwahaha!"

As I pondered, and Atofe stood with arms crossed, Kishirika’s high-pitched laughter faded away, carried off into the distance by the Doppler effect. Was she letting herself be caught on purpose? She really was a storm of a person. In any case—I now knew Geese’s location.

And I had obtained the "Eye of Distant Sight."

Geese and his Final Ally

Volume 23 - Chapter 11

★Badigadi★

This is a good opportunity. Let me tell you a story from long ago.

It is a tale of a man who mistakenly thought himself wise. Yes, he was mistaken. After all, everyone around him was an idiot. His colleagues, his sister who was far superior to him in strength, even the Great empress he revered—they were all lacking in intelligence.

Amidst such company, the man came to believe he was wise. And in truth, compared to the others, he was intelligent. Our bloodline is generally made up of idiots, but he was born with an exceptional mind. He understood the logic of things, could anticipate people's thoughts, and excelled at finding solutions to problems.

Even his father, a great man, called him a once-in-a-millennia genius, and he was given the moniker of Demon King of Wisdom. And so, he fell into the delusion that he was truly wise.

Hmm? What was that? If he was actually wise, then it wasn't a delusion? Bwahahahaha! No, no—that is exactly what made it a delusion!

Think about it. Just because someone is slightly more intelligent than idiots, does that truly make him wise? Of course not! If anything, believing oneself wise makes one all the more foolish! Now, let's get back to the story.

At the time, humans and demons were at war. The Second Human-Demon War. Compared to the later Laplace War, it was practically a child's game. We long-lived demons are patient by nature—our invasions were slow, and even when we won decisive battles, we allowed the humans to rebuild before pressing forward again. Most demons believed that as long as we won in the end, it didn't matter how long it took.

The man held a position as a strategic advisor in the Demon Army. He looked at the situation and lamented, "This won't do. If we truly wish to win, we must launch a more aggressive assault and seize key locations!" Of course, no one listened. Because they were all idiots who didn't understand strategy! Bwahahaha!

—And then, one day. Yes, truly just one day. There was no warning. Or perhaps there had been, but in the end, the man was an idiot. So if there were signs, he had failed to notice them.

One day, the man began to have dreams...

In his dreams, a certain figure appeared. He could not tell if it was a man or a woman, nor did their appearance remain in his memory. A truly dreamlike existence. The figure called itself the Man-God. He was the literal God of the Humans. The man asked himself:

“Has he come to kill me because I’m a demon?”

The figure replied: "I am God, you know? Everyone in this world is like a child to me. I have no desire to kill you. I simply wish to lend a hand to someone who is trying his best."

A truly audacious being. Though skeptical, the man received a small piece of advice from this so-called god before it vanished. After all, it was a trivial suggestion: “Take a small force and go to the Galgau Ruins.”

At the time, the man was quite serious. He knew that a Demon King was stationed there at the Galgau Ruins with his troops. There was no significant danger, but he figured it wouldn’t hurt to check things out.

And when he arrived—he was shocked. A battle was raging at Galgau Ruins, and the demon forces were losing. For the human army, the man’s sudden arrival was completely unexpected. His small force was not large, but it was enough to break the human formation.

Thus, the man saved one of the most influential Demon Kings of the Demon Army and gained considerable authority.

From there, things progressed rapidly. Using his intellect, the man manipulated the Demon Army from behind the scenes. At an unprecedented pace, he conquered human territories, convinced what was once a Beastfolk clan to join the demons, allied with the Seafolk, and expanded the Demon Army’s dominion. If things kept going this way, the extinction of humanity was only a matter of time.

The man thanked the god. "With this, I can avenge my great father’s death," the thought. But things did not go as he had hoped.

That moment... is something he remembers vividly.

His battle strategy had been flawless. Even looking back now, there was not a single flaw in it... Though, to be honest, the man can’t recall the actual details very well, Bwahahahaha! What he does remember is that if the plan had succeeded, they would have secured a foothold in the Asura Kingdom, cutting off all human escape routes. Victory for the demons would have been certain.

But that crucial battle ended in failure. And yet, something felt off. His army had the advantage in both numbers and quality. Even in terms of morale, the demons should have been superior. The humans likely didn't even understand the true significance of that battle, which was why their fortress had been poorly defended. That was why the man had confidently sent in his forces. And yet, they lost.

Every last one of the troops he had sent... was slaughtered. Yes, slaughtered. Not merely wiped out—that word is too soft. Not a single survivor remained.

The man visited the battlefield afterward... and what he saw chilled him to the bone. Tens of thousands of soldiers, crushed one by one. He could not comprehend how such a massacre had even occurred. The only thing he understood was that it had been almost entirely the work of one person.

The bodies all bore similar wounds. At that moment, he realized—humanity had given birth to a monster.

A Hero.

In the First Human-Demon War, a hero had risen, wielding overwhelming power to drive back the demons. The moment he saw the battlefield, he knew—this was history repeating itself.

From then on, nothing went as planned. Every single one of the man's strategies was foiled and crushed by that hero. And how did he know it was all the hero's doing? Simple. Not every battlefield was a massacre, but every major defeat had one thing in common—him.

Even the humans themselves didn't seem to understand what he was and didn't even know who that hero was. A figure clad in golden armor who appeared on the battlefield and ensured victory for humanity.

They called him the Golden Knight, Aldebaran.

Aldebaran turned the tide of war with sheer, overwhelming power, rallying humanity to his side. It was absurd. No matter how much the man schemed, no matter how meticulous his strategies were, they were simply overpowered through overwhelming power. Though it was called the Second Human-Demon War, in reality, it was the Demons versus Aldebaran.

And in the latter half of the war, the bastard didn't even bother wearing his armor. In the end, the demons could not defeat Aldebaran. The man lost every critical battle after that.

The human army pushed forward, marching toward the final stronghold of the demons— the Kishirisu Castle. At the time, the man still carried a strong sense of responsibility. He believed it was his fault that the Demon Kings

were dying, that his sister—one of the strongest Demon Kings—had been sealed away, that all the lands they had conquered were slipping away.

What an arrogant and foolish man...

Looking back now, there was no need to take responsibility for losing to an opponent like that. He should have done as the other Demon Kings had — fled and lived out his days quietly in some distant land.

No matter how much he blamed himself, there was nothing he could do. The Demon Army had collapsed. It was only a matter of time before humans took everything. And then—the woman he had thought the most foolish and hopeless of them all spoke:

"This is not your fault. Leave the rest to me."

She was his revered empress. A woman who lived freely, doing whatever she pleased. At the time, the man outwardly detested her. But—Bwahaha!—in truth, deep down, he was madly in love with her. The only reason he had become the Demon King of Wisdom and served as a strategist... was because he wanted to see her smile.

And at the very end—the man realized that. And so, he prayed to the god.

"Please... save her. Save our people. I will do anything."

That night, he appeared.

He came to the man in a dream. A figure with no clear form—neither man nor woman—one whose image refused to linger in his memory.

With a smile on his face, he raised a hand in greeting, like an old friend meeting him on the roadside.

"Hey!"

Naturally, the man was skeptical.

Why would he, the God of the Humans, respond to the plea of a demon like him? As if answering his unspoken question, he spoke.

"Aldebaran is a wicked Fighting God. Even I’m troubled by him. At this rate, your precious queen will be killed, and the demons will be wiped out."

Looking back on it now, it was a flawed argument. Why would the God of the Humans be troubled if the demons were wiped out? But at the time, the man was desperate. He was drowning, grasping for anything that might keep him afloat.

"What should I do?"

At his response, the Man-God smiled. With a sickening, insidious smile.

"Nothing much. Just do exactly as I tell you."

And so, the man set off in a journey. At that time, the man was unimaginably frail—thin as a skeleton. But he was an immortal demon. The man walked without rest, without sleep. He slipped through the human armies, crossed ten forests, forded five rivers, climbed three mountains, and finally, at the bottom of a now-lost labyrinth... he found it.

A small purple vial.

It had likely once been some kind of medicine, but the labyrinth's magic had altered its properties.

"That is the Elixir of Demon Eyes Concealment. If you drink it, Demon Eyes will no longer be able to perceive you."

Perhaps it was something that should have been found by a human hero — meant to be a countermeasure against the Demon Empress herself, Kishirika Kishirisu. A single dose, and its effects would last until death.

The man drank it down without hesitation. Then, he ran again.

The man crossed a valley so deep he could not see the bottom, braved blizzards across the frozen plains, and climbed the tallest mountain in the world. And there, he found it.[42]

A suit of golden armor.

From head to toe, it gleamed brilliantly—not in a gaudy way, but with an allure so captivating that it seemed to draw in all who beheld it... A cursed, ominous and sinister armor, sealed away and hidden deep within the treacherous mountain.

"That armor grants its wearer invincible power."

Let me say this again—the man was an idiot. He never stopped to question why it had been sealed. Why it had been hidden. Calling himself the Demon King of Wisdom was laughable. The man was more suited to the title Demon King of Stupidity.

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[42] Reminder that the tallest mountain in the world is Dragon Roar Mountain, so he invaded Laplace's house and robbed him.

Following the Man-God's words, the man released the seal. The seal was complex, but for one who prided himself on wisdom, breaking it was not difficult. And so, the man broke the seal... donned the armor...

And so, the man lost everything.

Indeed, the armor held tremendous power. An overwhelming surge of mana had granted the armor a will of its own. At first, however, the man felt no such presence. He was simply intoxicated by the power it granted him.

With this, the man was certain he could defeat Aldebaran. With this, he would massacre the humans. Yes, from that moment on—the man was already losing himself.

The man had never been one for combat. But driven by an unnatural thirst for battle, he ran like the wind. He leapt from the highest mountain, crossed valleys, braved blizzards, scaled three more mountains, forded five more rivers, passed through ten more forests— he tore through the human army — And returned to his beloved.

He thought I had made it in time. Because—she was still alive. Bloodied, battered, on the verge of death—but alive.

And the one fighting her... Well, this is difficult to explain.

It wasn't Aldebaran.

Or rather—it was, but wasn't.

The human known as Aldebaran, the one that had appeared in the first battle—the human knight clad in golden armor—should have already been dead after all that time. No, the one standing before me was—

The Dragon God Laplace.

Or perhaps, the Demon Dragon God Laplace, as he would later be called. The man was aware of his existence. The Dragon God, Laplace. A man who had lived in seclusion in the mountains—a gentle man with a calm demeanor who sometimes descended to a village to teach them his fighting style. A man whom the Immortal Demons had a long-standing rule about:

"Never lay a hand against this man..."

That was all the man knew.

And yet—here he was, and for some reason, he was trying to kill her. Normally, the man would have questioned why. He would have sought

reason, he would have asked why. He would have used logic to persuade Laplace—to avoid conflict.

But at that moment, the man was no longer himself. The sight of her loved one battered form sent the man into a frenzy. For the first time in his life, he roared. And then the man charged at Laplace.

Laplace was startled. Of course, he was. After all, someone had found the sealed armor, an armor which should have been impossible to find. And not only that— the man was completely invisible to his Demon Eye.

But even so—even so, the title of Demon Dragon God was not for show. He was the last remaining King of the Ancient Dragonfolk. The one even the Immortal Demons had decreed: “Never go against him”.

Had the man fought using his normal strength, he wouldn’t have lasted even a few seconds. And in truth, the first strike did sever both of the man’s arms and decapitate him. Had the man not been wearing the armor, that would have been the end. Had the man not been an immortal demon, that would have been the end.

But the man was wearing the armor. And the man was an immortal demon.

He regenerated instantly from the severed flesh—and the armor repaired itself just as quickly. Even as his consciousness waned, the armor forced the man’s body to move—to fight.

A fierce battle ensued.

Laplace’s one mistake was this— He never anticipated that his own creation would fall into someone else’s hands other than those who he had selected.

The man knew nothing of combat. But the armor forged weapons at will, replicated all fighting styles, analyzed the battlefield, and selected the perfect move from over a thousand secret techniques.

It knew all the secret techniques.

Of course, this included those that Laplace himself had spent years perfecting.

It was the ultimate irony.

I do not know what drove Laplace to create this or what he was thinking when developing this technique. But one thing was certain— His own technique became his undoing. It was a technique that would be fatal to Laplace himself.

Laplace was cut in half.

The man, the idiot who had sought only knowledge, had defeated the strongest being in the world— And he had saved the woman he loved. A glorious ending, no? A perfect happy ending! Bwahahahaha!

...Or so I wished I could say. But the story did not end there. Because—the man was still moving.

The armor had taken the man's will. He had become a monster, driven only by fighting lust. And when the man regained his consciousness — His blade was piercing the heart of the woman he loved.

I do not know why the man came to his senses. Perhaps she had used her last strength to do something. Perhaps it was simply a shock too great to ignore. Either way—It was too late. The man had killed the woman he loved with his own hands.

"A... a..."

No words came. Because she was the only one he had wanted to protect.

"Fwa... ha... ha..."

But she was different. Even in her final moments—betrayed by the one she trusted most— She smiled.

"You still... always wear that scowl... Such a dull man... Laugh."

"...Huh?"

"No matter the situation... Just laugh... always."

"But, I... I love you..."

"It doesn't matter... It doesn't matter... You take things too seriously... Always scowling... Locking yourself away in a room, drinking no wine, taking no sleep... What's the point of living like that? Laugh loudly, embrace a woman..."

"I have no need for other women... I love you!"

"Fwahaha... What's that? Then become a more cheerful man... If you can do that... I shall marry you in the next life."

"Y-Yes... I will do my best..."

"Then in the next life, you shall be my fiancé... Fwahaha, fwaha..."

In her final moments—she laughed. A roaring, powerful laugh.

"Fwaaahahahahaha! Fwaaaha, fwaaaha, fwaaahahahahahahahaha!"

And within that booming laughter—the man and the woman were engulfed in light— And died.

...Hmph. You seem puzzled.

I see it on your face—why did they suddenly get engulfed in light? Well, you see—Laplace exploded. As expected of a man who had lived for nothing but his mission—Laplace had planned even for his own death. Even as he lay dying, he had prepared a spell. A spell that would scatter his 'Aspects' across time—allowing him to resurrect after centuries.

But this—this was where the Man-God's scheme came into play.

The ultimate technique unleashed by the armor disrupted the spell — rendering it incomplete.

Laplace had been split in two. His mana pool too had been split in two, and the incredible amount of mana that was meant to be used upon his death, had nowhere to go—and went out of control. A massive surge of mana, without a proper vessel to contain it— It exploded.

The Immortal Laplace was dead.

...Well, technically, he was split into two.

One became the Demon God, and the other the Technique God. But the Dragon Demon God Laplace—as he was once known—was no more. So for all intents and purposes... Laplace was dead. Now, as for the man—

He was an Immortal Demon. It would take time, but eventually, he would return. And as he drifted in the void of unconsciousness— He dreamed. And in that dream— The Man-God was there.

"Hehe, haha... HAHAHAHAHAHA!"

The Man-God was laughing. Like a complete fool.

"The Demon King of Wisdom!? HAH! You danced in the palm of my hand! You even went and killed the woman you loved! You're nothing but a mindless puppet!"

The Man-God had known. He had known that if the man obtained the armor—if he faced Laplace in battle— The armor would consume his mind.

That he would lose himself. That he would kill the woman he loved with his own hands. He knew— And still, he tricked him.

He played the fool, gained his trust, and controlled him.

"Ahhh... no matter how many times I see it; it never gets old... That dumbfounded look on your face—priceless! I live for that expression!"

The Man-God laughed.

He mocked him. He ridiculed him. He debased him.

"Well then—this is goodbye. We won't be meeting again, but hey, enjoy your long life, Demon King of Stupidity."

And with that—

The Man-God vanished.

Rest

Volume 25 - Chapter 8

Ruijerd was eating.

His house had become unusually neat and tidy. It wasn't at the level of being spotless, but it was clear that it was being cleaned daily.

Ruijerd wasn't the type to leave things scattered around, but he also wasn't the kind to care about dust accumulating in the corners of the room or on the window frames. And yet, even those areas had been properly cleaned. Though, it was still a bit lacking.

If my sister, who worked as a maid at our house, saw it, she'd probably say, "What kind of cleaning is this!?" No, she probably wouldn't even say that. If Aisha saw dusty window frames, she'd just half-close her eyes and sigh as if saying, "You can't even clean properly?" I think I saw her do that once when Linia was working as a maid at our house.

Anyway, who was the craftsman responsible for this not-quite-perfectly cleaned room?

Ding ding! That was fast! The answer is... Norn Greyrat, who is diligently serving something that looks like porridge next to Ruijerd! Correct! Rudeus-kun, you win a Roxy figurine! Yay!

And so, there was Norn, looking slightly surprised as she turned toward me. She was probably startled by us barging in during mealtime. Well, let's put that aside for now.

"What's the matter? Did something happen?"

Ruijerd looked at me with a suspicious expression.

"Yes, first, this gentleman here wishes to formally greet you."

I gestured toward Sándor with my palm. He stood rigidly at attention.

"I am Sándor Von Grandeur, formally known as the North God Kalman II, Alex Rybak! It is an immense honor to meet the legendary warrior, Master Ruijerd Superdia, a hero of the Laplace War who led us to victory. At your service!"

He was clearly nervous. It was a stark contrast to his usual carefree and composed demeanor. Well, I suppose that makes sense. For him, the warriors who fought in the Laplace War were legends from the generation before his own. I didn't fully grasp the sentiment, but it was probably

similar to how delinquent manga portray “legendary gang members who once ruled the entire country.” As the leader of a top-tier delinquent gang in a relatively peaceful era, he probably couldn’t help but bow his head in respect to those who had accomplished such great feats.

"...As a warrior of the Superd tribe, I thank you for your assistance in this battle."

Ruijerd, ever the honorable man, smoothly bowed his head as if realizing he had forgotten to do so.

"Ah, please, raise your head!"

Sándor, flustered, hurried to stop him. The scene turned into a bowing contest, much like you’d see among overly polite Japanese people. Meanwhile, Eris had already taken a seat and was having Norn serve her some porridge. She had probably worked up quite an appetite from all the movement. She was eating vigorously, without hesitation. It looked delicious. A bowl was also placed in front of me, so I naturally followed suit and began eating. It wasn’t bad. Not extraordinarily delicious, but not something I wouldn’t be able to cook myself. Well, maybe I could make it just a bit better... but only marginally.

"It’s delicious!"

"Thank you."

"Did you make this, Norn?"

"Yes."

Hearing that, I took a second look at my porridge.

So, this was Norn’s homemade cooking. Since when did she learn such an advanced skill? That thought crossed my mind, but then again, Norn was a young woman of marriageable age, and this world had its equivalent of bridal training. Learning how to cook wasn’t unusual.

Thinking that way made it taste even better. Norn was growing, little by little. As her big brother, I was proud. That emotion acted as a seasoning, amplifying the taste of the porridge tenfold, even a hundredfold. At this point, it was practically a drug. But more importantly—

"Now then, Ruijerd, I brought Sándor here because he has something he really wants to ask you."

"Something to ask?"

"Yes. It might be a topic you'd rather not discuss, but..."

After that preface, I explained the situation to Ruijerd.

Sándor held deep admiration for Ruijerd and the others who defeated Laplace and genuinely wanted to learn the full story of that battle. Additionally, Sándor's father, North God Kalman (the first), had died in that war. As his son, Sándor wanted to uncover the truth about his death and, depending on the circumstances, avenge him. I conveyed all of this, along with Sándor's tearful backstory.

"Rudeus."

"Yes?"

"Why are you lying?"

"I got carried away..."

It was common knowledge that North God Kalman had survived the battle against Demon God Laplace. Afterward, he had gone alone to confront and subdue Demon King Atofe, eventually marrying her. Otherwise, Sándor wouldn't have even been born. After many adventures, he traveled the world and finally met his end in the King Dragon Mountain Range.

"Heh, you're the same as ever."

In the past, if I had lied to Ruijerd—a man of such strong morals—he might have flown into a rage. But now, he understood that it was just a joke. That level of trust meant a lot to me.

"Well, Sándor might not have any grand reason for wanting to hear your story, but if you don't mind, please share it with him."

"It's not much of a story."

With that disclaimer, Ruijerd began his tale.

Freed from the curse of his spear, Ruijerd had become afflicted by another curse. A curse called revenge.

Driven by it, he hurried toward Laplace. By the time he arrived, the decisive battle had already begun—no, it was reaching its conclusion. North God Kalman had fallen. Perugius' Twelve Familiars were annihilated, save for one. Perugius himself was covered in wounds, kneeling on the ground.

Only Urupen continued to fight bravely, but it was clear that he was being completely overwhelmed by Laplace. As for Laplace, he was visibly exhausted but still seemed to have plenty of energy left.

Even in that dire situation, Ruijerd remained calm.

He suppressed his killing intent and observed closely the man who had deceived the Superds and driven them to near extinction—Laplace.

Laplace was powerful. However, Ruijerd had some knowledge, albeit vague, about the three warriors currently fighting him. In particular, he had crossed weapons with both North God Kalman and Dragon God Urupen multiple times when he was in his right mind.

Both were exceptionally powerful fighters. Especially Urupen—if Ruijerd fought him head-on, there was no way he could win. The winged woman standing near Perugius also appeared to be a formidable warrior.

And yet, despite all this, Laplace remained standing. He was wounded, but he still had an air of composure. Even if Ruijerd launched an attack out of sheer rage, it might not be enough to kill him. With that in mind, Ruijerd held back his anger and looked for a decisive opening. That was when he noticed something within Laplace's body.

"Something" moving rapidly inside him. He couldn't tell what it was, but relying on his warrior's intuition developed over years of battle, he deduced that it must be Laplace's weak point. There was no time to verify his theory.

Before his eyes, Laplace attempted to land the finishing blow on Perugius. Urupen stepped in to protect him and took the attack instead. Urupen suffered severe injuries, and at that moment, victory became impossible.

Laplace smiled, savoring his triumph.

And then, in the very next instant, Ruijerd crept up behind him and struck. He aimed at that "something" he had suspected to be Laplace's weak point. The result was dramatic. Laplace immediately writhed in agony, lost in a blind fury, and lashed out at Ruijerd in retaliation.

It wasn't an instant kill, but something had changed. However, that was all Ruijerd could manage. Laplace completely overpowered him. Laplace's Demon Eye dulled Ruijerd's movements. His punches shattered bones even through a guard. Ruijerd's attacks were effortlessly blocked.

It was a complete suppression—as easy as twisting a child's arm. Ruijerd was utterly crushed. Just as he steeled himself for a final desperate charge, the ground beneath him began to glow. A pale blue light radiated from the ground, illuminating the surroundings.

A magic circle.

Looking around, he saw Urupen, pressing his hands to the earth, chanting something. Laplace's expression contorted.

"This... this can’t be!" he cried out.

The moment he shouted, the magic circle erupted with an overwhelming light. Ruijerd’s vision was consumed by brightness. But even though he could not see, his Superd third eye confirmed it—Laplace’s body and mana were being torn apart. His ears captured the final scream of Laplace.

"Don’t think you can kill me with just this! Man——! Man——! I will kill you all! I will definitely destroy you! I swear, I will kill you, damn you...!"

Those were Laplace’s last words.

"I don’t know the details of that technique," Ruijerd admitted.

"Dragon God's Requiem: Draconic Remnant! It was a decisive battle magic for Laplace that Lord Perugius resurrected from ancient texts!"

"I see."

What a ridiculously over-the-top name! Do all dragonfolk insist on naming their techniques like this? Well, I don’t hate it.

"So, in the end, it really was used... And it was Lord Urupen who casted it... I see. That must be why Lord Urupen passed away so soon after the battle... That technique should have originally been Lord Perugius’ responsibility... Then, of course, Perugius must feel ashamed of his own failure. He might even blame himself, believing he was the one who killed Urupen... Everything makes sense now!"

Sándor was nodding to himself, completely absorbed in his realization. His rapid, excited otaku-like speech reminded me of my past self, and it was a little unnerving. I didn’t fully grasp all the details, but in summary—Perugius was supposed to cast that technique in the final battle, but since he was utterly beaten by Laplace, he couldn’t do it.

Instead, Urupen had to protect him and activate the spell in his place, which ultimately led to his own death. If that’s the case, then it’s no wonder. If it were me, I’d probably lock myself away and have Roxy comfort me for days... No wonder Perugius has been floating around in the sky for four hundred years, watching for signs of Laplace’s return. He must have sworn to himself that this time, I will be the one to do it.

"Wait a second. But if the decisive battle magic was used, doesn't that mean Laplace was killed?"

"They thought so at the time, but later, when Lord Perugius investigated Laplace's fortress, he discovered that Laplace had prepared a way to reincarnate in case of his death. That's why he refers to it as a seal rather than a complete destruction."

"...I see."

Ruijerd's face darkened.

If Laplace was going to return, he probably felt obligated to fight once more. But even if Laplace was fated to return, reincarnation meant that he had died once. So, they really had killed him.

I suddenly felt guilty for ever joking about "The Three Heroes Who Killed the Demon God (Except Not Really)".

"I know nothing beyond that. Afterward, I parted ways with them and returned to the Demon Continent."

And so, for four hundred years, he had struggled to help his people, leading up to this moment. Hearing it all laid out like this, it was clear—Ruijerd had lived a harsh and painful life.

But at least he had found others of his kind here.

That was good.

Really, truly good.

His path to restoring the Superd name was progressing well too. At this rate, before I die, the phrase "If you don't sleep at night, the Superd will come and eat you!" might change to "If you don't sleep at night, monsters will come, but the Superd will protect you."

Heh, kids might start staying up late on purpose.

"Thank you so much for sharing this precious story! I never expected to meet you here of all places! I'm so moved! A long-standing mystery has finally been solved!"

Sándor beamed with joy, repeatedly bowing his head in gratitude.

The Armor
Volume 25 - Chapter 10

★Badigadi★

Not long after I was born into this world, my father taught me something.

He said: "There is one being in this world whom you must never oppose."

When I asked why, my father gave only vague, evasive answers. He never truly explained. It remains one of my rare childhood memories—one I look back on with a strange sense of nostalgia.

Time passed, and after the conclusion of the Second Human-Demon War, a new saying began to circulate.

"There are three beings in this world whom you must never oppose."

Oh, how amusing. The number had increased to three. But when I first heard the names, I couldn't help but laugh. Because the three were:

- The Dragon God
- The Demon God
- The Fighting God

I instinctively asked, "Then, shouldn't it be four?" After all, Technique God should have been included in that list. However, I suppose it couldn't be helped. Hardly anyone had ever seen Technique God—and even his very existence was questionable.

Still, as the Demon King of Wisdom, I knew that whether it was three or four, the truth remained the same. For in the end, there was only one true threat.

The Demon Dragon God Laplace.

He had reigned supreme for ages until he was split in two at the conclusion of the Second Human-Demon War—and even now that he's split, his existence as a threat continued to dominate the world. He was, without a doubt, the strongest being in known history.

Every time I encountered some cocky young fool, I would remind them: "There are three beings you must never oppose." The North God Kalman, liked that phrase in particular—he would repeat it at every opportunity. He was the type to be easily influenced. But now, if you asked the younger generation to name "the three beings you must never oppose," you'd likely get different answers. Some might even name North God Kalman himself.

After all, it has been four hundred years since Laplace's threat vanished. So I don’t mind. What I truly want to say is simple—

Laplace was terrifyingly powerful.

I have lived long, but I have never seen a being more dangerous than him. And yet—according to the Man-God—there exists an even greater threat. That threat is the current Dragon God.

The Dragon God Orsted.

A man who has inherited the techniques of Dragon God Urupen. I believe he was called the 100th Dragon God? It’s hard to believe the lineage lasted that long, but then again, Urupen was never the most precise when it came to numbers, so it might not matter how many they were.

Regardless, it seems that the Dragon God Orsted is immensely powerful. To the point where he surpasses even the Demon God and the Technique God. To the point where even the Demon Dragon God Laplace would not stand a chance. If you ask me if I believe such a thing... well, it’s difficult to accept.

I fought Laplace once. His strength was beyond comprehension. To imagine something greater—it’s impossible! Bwahahahaha! And yet—That scheming Man-God. That wretched being who looks down on all who dwell in this world, who didn’t even consider Laplace a threat—Even he fears the Dragon God Orsted. He desperately tries to stop him. To kill that terrifying man.

And yet—he cannot.

He has even gone so far as to lower his head and beg me for assistance. That alone is proof enough of Orsted’s power. So then—who could possibly stand against such a being?

The answer is no one.

Even the Demon Dragon God Laplace had no equal. I don’t know all the details, but according to my father, for over ten thousand years, the Dragon God has remained unrivaled. And why wouldn’t he? He had the strongest physique, the invincible armor, the most supreme fighting style. How could anyone defeat such a being? Even during the Laplace War four hundred years ago, when Demon God Laplace held only half of his original power—And it still took seven heroes to merely seal him away.

Oh? I see that look on your face. You have a question, right?

"Then, why is the Demon Dragon God Laplace gone?"

"Why was he split into the Technique God and the Demon God, leaving the title of Dragon God to Orsted?"

The answer is simple. Because another person with the title of Fighting God appeared. The second Fighting God. ...Though, to be fair, that man was nothing more than a thief.

Yes. A certain man stole the ultimate armor created by Laplace—the Fighting God Armor. And this Fighting God Armor was terrifyingly powerful. It granted its wearer strength so immense that it seemed crafted with the purpose of slaying even a God.

...Of course, any ordinary person would die the moment they put it on... No, even an extraordinary person would die after wearing it for a while... To put it into perspective—it was so dangerous that even the Demon Dragon God Laplace himself refused to wear it during the final battles of the Second Human-Demon War. And yet—this thief, empowered by the armor, battled the Demon Dragon God Laplace— And they killed each other.

Oh, the irony! Laplace was slain by his own creation!

"...This story is getting long. So what's your point?"

"My point? If we obtain the Fighting God Armor, we might have a way to defeat the Dragon God Orsted."

"And if we don't?"

"Defeat is certain. The young North God and the fangless Sword God might deny it, but I, who have fought the Dragon God and survived, know better than anyone—he exists on another level.

"....."

"Even though I am an immortal demon—if I fight him, I will die. Because he knows how to kill immortal demons."

"...So what do we do?"

"Isn't it obvious? We go and get it."

"You say that so easily, but you're not about to tell me that something that dangerous is just lying around in your backyard, right?"

"No, no, it is sealed away in an incredibly difficult-to-reach location."

"That’s a problem, then. We can’t just waltz in and take it."

"Bwahahahaha! For me, it’s as easy as fetching something from my barn!"

"Yeah, well, I don’t think it’s gonna be that simple..."

Geese let out an exasperated sigh. But it was already too late. Because right in front of us— There was a massive, gaping abyss. A hole, fifty meters wide, in the middle of the ocean. Nothing but ordinary, unassuming reefs surrounding it. And yet— From within that endless void— Water was steadily pouring out. Yes, rather than flowing in, it was welling up from within. Now, I wonder, where exactly did this water originate, and where did it vanish to?

Moreover, to those with the right perception, it was clear that an immense magical power was radiating from the depths of the hole. And by "those with the right perception," I meant beings like myself.

"This place is thick with some seriously bad energy."

"Oh? So you can tell?"

"I once took part in an S-rank teleportation labyrinth raid and succeeded, but this is on a whole different level..."

"Bwahahahaha! Naturally! This labyrinth is unlike any other. It is the convergence point of all the mana unleashed during the Second Human-Demon War. A place where a vast expanse of land was erased from existence, where the souls of tens of millions of demons still wander aimlessly."

"One of the Three Great Labyrinths of the World— ‘the Demon God’s Cave’."

Gulp!

Perched on my shoulder, Geese let out a strangled groan.

★ ★ ★

How many layers had we descended by now? Geese had memorized every single path through the labyrinth. The routes given to him by the Man-God were utterly absurd.

Why did this lead us through the floor? Why had we yet to encounter a single monster? None of it made sense. And yet—Geese never questioned it.

Of course, he wouldn't. If he had ever doubted the Man-God's words, even once in his life, this man would not be standing here today. He knew this truth well—perhaps that was why he was so grateful to the Man-God.

"Bwahahahaha! Why is it that the deepest parts of labyrinths always have such ridiculously grandiose doors?!"

"Who knows? Maybe even labyrinths have a sense of pride."

"Bwahahaha! Pride! What a thought! Bwahahahaha!"

Standing before us was a massive door—easily ten meters tall. It was nearly the same size as the gate to Kishirika's castle during the Second Human-Demon War. That door—never once in its existence—had ever been opened. It was so massive that even attempting to open it was a monumental task. Even those far larger than I had opted to use the side entrance instead. Ah, the nostalgia... Back then, I had often grumbled—"Why in the world would you build such a massive, useless door!? You should melt it down and turn it into weapons for our soldiers!" But Kishirika had simply dismissed me. "If a hero ever comes, a shabby little door would disgrace me as the Demon Empress!"

Such foolish words. In the end, I wonder— Did Laplace ever open that door? Did he kick it down, at the very least? If he did, then perhaps it did have some purpose after all. Back then, I was so sure of my own wisdom. But now that I stand here, as the one attempting to break through as the challenger—

Do I finally understand what Kishirika meant by "dignity"? No. Not at all. Bwahahahaha! This door is so absurdly massive it barely even looks like a door—it's practically just a wall! Any so-called hero would ignore this nonsense and just take the side entrance!

"There's something waiting behind this door."

"It seems so."

At Geese's words, I nodded. There was always something at the deepest parts of a labyrinth. And the higher the rank of the labyrinth, the grander that final room became. The most majestic I had ever seen was the Golden Gate at the heart of the Black Iron Labyrinth. It was something that would have thrilled Kishirika.

But whatever lay beyond this door— Was surely the guardian of the labyrinth. And the guardian of the Demon God's Cave... Was bound to be something beyond comprehension.

Well, no matter. Geese already knew how to defeat it. It would be a struggle, surely— But we would win.

Yet— As I stood before the door— The laughter faded from my lips.

"What's wrong, boss? Don’t tell me you're getting cold feet?"

"...I am."

I answered honestly. Geese turned, eyes wide with shock.

"W-whoa, whoa, hold on! You of all people!? I get it, this is a hellish labyrinth, and the guardian’s gonna be a nightmare! But you’re a goddamn Immortal Demon King! What do you have to be afraid of?!"

The monkey-faced demon always played the fool when trying to persuade someone. But when it mattered, he would lower his voice—And plant his words deep inside his listener’s heart. That was his way of talking. But—this wasn’t about the guardian.

"Look."

I turned back— And gestured behind me. A sea of corpses sprawled across the ground. Flames erupted from unseen sources. The ground rumbled in endless earthquakes. Fissures tore through the floor, swallowing everything in their path. And scattered amidst the wreckage— Lay the undead.

Shattered bones. Ghosts fading into mist. Black armor, crushed into pieces.

"Yeah... this place really is like hell, huh? If someone actually managed to conquer it for real, their name would be passed down for generations. But this time... well, there's no one we can tell, and no one would believe us anyway..."

"Indeed. But to me, this is a familiar sight."

Geese turned back to me—his face twisted in confusion.

"Huh? The hell does that mean? You’ve been here before?"

"Indeed, but not this place in specific."

No. But I had seen this place before. On the day the Second Human-Demon War ended. I had donned the Fighting God Armor and rushed back to the stronghold of the demons—All to save Kishirika.

And what I saw was... A battlefield where the mana was so thick, the dead rose as undead within an hour. And all of those undead bodies—Were all people I knew well.

They were Kishirika's Royal Guards.

The warriors who had sworn loyalty to her. The ones deemed worthy of standing at her side. The truest warriors among the demons. They must have fought to the death. And they had all been cut down—in a single strike. Because every single one of them—

Had been beheaded and turned into Dullahans.

And now, the undead before me—They were... the same. They were not the exact same individuals. But their characteristics were eerily familiar. They were created as imitations of the fallen.

Yet—I knew. I recognized them. And now that I thought about it—Every part of this labyrinth... I had seen it before. The spiral stone staircase between the first and second floors. The fortress-like interior of the upper layers. The starlit ceilings of the mid-level chambers. The armor worn by humanoid monsters. The collapsed walls, the tiny flowers growing between the cracks— Even the extinct creatures that should no longer exist.

I had seen everything before. No—this wasn't just familiarity. It was déjà vu.

I sat down.

"What's up, boss? Taking a break?"

"Sit."

Geese hesitated—but then sat across from me. It felt like the kind of moment where two men ought to share a drink. But alas—we had none. And this wasn't a story to tell while sober. Still, no matter.

"Tell me, Geese—have you ever heard that this world was once shaped differently?"

"You mean like that old tale? The one where Golden Knight Aldebaran didn't just defeat Kishirika Kishirisu, but also split the continent and created an ocean?"

"Exactly."

That legend had long since been dismissed as fiction. The idea that one man could reshape the very land—Who would believe such a thing? After all—When people gaze upon the vastness of the land, the immensity of the

mountains and the oceans— They understand their own insignificance. Even I had felt the same.

"Yeah, I don’t really buy it either. But... you were there, weren’t you?"

"I was."

Geese inhaled sharply. He understood.

"When I was born—there was no such thing as the Ringus Sea."

Geese froze. Just days ago, we had sailed across that very sea. And now, to hear that it once did not exist—It was no wonder he looked so shaken. The only reason Geese believed my words was because they had come from me.

"Idatz Mountain, Ares Hill, Mimishillan River, Cabre Lake... Ever heard of them?"

"....."

Geese shook his head. As expected.

"Each of these were once real places—each with its own history. For example, Idatz Mountain... It was once famous as the place where the elven swordsman Idatzleid first awakened his secret technique."

"H-huh..."

He had no clue. Of course, he wouldn’t. Idatzleid was a man who had perished during the First Human-Demon War. An elven swordsman who had cut down thousands of demons.

In the end, he met his demise in a legendary duel—Against one of the Five Great Demon Kings, the Immortal Necross Lacross. There were no surviving records of that tale, no one left to pass it down, and even the mountain that symbolized it was gone. It was only natural that no one knew of it. It felt as though every trace of that man's existence had been erased from history.

But I still remembered.

The legend of the sword master Idatzleid had been well-known during the Second Human-Demon War. Not everyone knew of it, but among those with any knowledge of swordsmanship, it was common wisdom.

And yet now, no one knew.

"People, buildings... even the land itself has vanished. Everything is gone."

Speaking the words aloud made my chest tighten.

"The Fighting God Armor we are about to retrieve... possesses such power."

What came to mind were all the things that had been lost—memories now erased. Beautiful landscapes that no one remembered.

"It holds the power to erase even the world itself."

Did Geese truly understand just how much could be lost?

"If the same fate were to unfold in the Biheiril Kingdom... the entire Sky Continent would be wiped out, along with half of the Central and Demon Continents."

"....."

"The massive explosion would alter the terrain of the remaining land. The Central Continent would no longer be as fertile as it once was. The Great Forest could become a desert. Millis might be swallowed by the sea. Begaritt could be pushed further away, even more isolated than it is now..."

"....."

"When the land changes, so do cultures. Lifestyles shift. Conflicts arise. It may be difficult to grasp from mere words, but..."

When I first awakened after that battle, I was shocked. The world seemed unchanged at a glance—yet it had transformed completely.

"It was an entirely different world."

The destruction of a world is not always as dramatic as one might think. It's surprisingly mundane. And after thousands of years, it fades from memory. Only the Immortal Demon Clan still remembers what once was.

I changed after that war. I became betrothed to Kishirika, and I stopped thinking about complicated things. I lived each day in joy and sang of peace. That was how I spent the past 4,200 years— A time full of good memories.

...And whatever bad memories there were, I conveniently forgot them. Bwahahahaha!

"....."

Geese would never understand my perspective.

"And yet, when I think about it... my feet refuse to move."

Unlike Atofe, I was a reasonable man. And yet, if I had stopped moving now, it meant that I still lacked conviction. After all, I was the Demon King of Wisdom—without reason, I could not act. Bwahahahaha!

And so, I would wait to be convinced. This was a test of Geese's silver tongue—A Demon King's trial.

"...Hey, boss."

"Hmm?"

After a brief silence, Geese spoke.

"You're an Immortal Demon, right? You see the world from a completely different perspective than someone like me."

"That is true."

"So when the land changes, cultures shift, and the world starts feeling like a different place... I get why it looks that way to you."

"It would look that way to anyone, no?"

"Nah, not to me. That’s not how it works."

Geese shook his head.

"To me, all you gotta do is cross the border to another country and it feels like a different world. And if you wait just ten years before returning home, it feels like a completely different place."

Ten years, huh? I was well aware, but for most races, ten years was a long time.

"Sure, in just ten years, there are still plenty of things that stay the same, and sometimes it’s a relief to see them. But every time I saw them, I’d think—I’m the one who hasn’t changed. And that would drag me down."

His tone remained lighthearted, but there was a weight to his words.

"The destruction of a world? Sounds glorious to me. I’d love to have a damn statue built in my honor afterward."

It sounded like a joke, but his voice was serious.

"Then again, if an explosion that big happens, I probably won't live to see it. Hell, I might not even make it past the shockwaves of the battles ahead."

Geese looked straight at me as he continued.

"My boss—Rudeus—he's an incredible guy. Sure, he's got an insane amount of mana, but just like me, he can't wield battle aura. And yet, he never let that stop him—he trained, he adapted. And most of all, he's humble enough to rely on others. Not the other way around—he's not just relied upon. He knows how to rely on others. For someone as capable as him, he could do everything alone. But he doesn't. He knows how to delegate when it matters. That's something most people can't do. I know I can't beat him. Not in a real fight. But this time, this isn't a fight—it's about gathering allies. And in that, I want to win. I have nothing else I'm good at—this is all I've got. I've gathered the Sword God, the North God, the Dark King, the Ogre God, and the Fighting God. With the help of the Man-God, I've assembled the best lineup possible. This is my strategy. My battle. If I put this together—if this is my plan—then even if I die along the way, so be it. I've spent my life following the Man-God's orders, surviving like a filthy rat. I always clung to my life like it was the most important thing. I thought it was the only thing that mattered. And yet, somewhere deep down, I always wondered—was there something more important? But this is it. It ends here. Even if I know I'm walking into death, I won't stop. So you better make up your mind too. If Rudeus is my opponent, then the Dragon God Orsted is yours. If he's even stronger than Laplace, then letting the world burn seems like a fitting cost for our battle, don't you think?"

Risking one's life. As one of the Immortal Demons, it was a concept beyond my understanding. Sure, the Dragon God knew techniques that could kill my kind, and that was how my father had died. But even so, I couldn't fully grasp it. Even Atofe had been sealed away multiple times—yet she still walked the earth. Death simply wasn't something I feared.

Yet I knew how much it mattered to mortals. Especially someone like Geese, who had spent his whole life cherishing it. Even though he had little to show for it, he had guarded his life with everything he had.

...And perhaps, that was why.

Because now, when he finally had the chance to do something meaningful, he was willing to lay it down. I didn't have to follow him—But I had already chosen to oppose The Dragon God. I had already chosen to side with the Man-God. Despite swearing that I would never wage war again after the Second Human-Demon War—I had come all the way here, to the Demon God's Cave, to retrieve the Fighting God Armor. I had to be prepared.

Just like Geese.

"Bwahahahaha! You're absolutely right!"

"Very well! Then let us claim the armor that will destroy the world!"[43]

"Now you're talking! Let's do this!"

Perhaps I had overthought things. Long ago, I had learned that sometimes it was best to act without hesitation. To charge forward recklessly, with nothing but momentum. Because that was the kind of man who was worthy of Kishirika. And if that was the case—

Then so be it!

Bwahahahaha!

[43] The "Fighting God" could also be translated to "The God of War" (Spanish official translation) as "Tou" (闘) is both "Fight" and "War". Both could be canon through their own meanings as it was an armor made to fight gods, and had the irony of Badigadi being someone who doesn't like to fight. And also, a key figure in the Second War. Both meanings are represented through that kanji, but alas, we need to choose one or the other.

The Fighting God Menace
Volume 26 – Chapter 1

And so, I returned to the Superd tribe's village.

It seems my trump card hasn't arrived yet. It should have already arrived according to the plan... Something might have happened. Should I wait... What should I do... Suppressing such indecision, I sat in seiza style in front of Orsted and reported the events until yesterday.

"That's it. I don't know the whereabouts of the Ogre God, Atofe, and Sándor."

Orsted had a stern expression.

"The Fighting God Badigadi."

"Do you have a strategy?"

"...None. I know about the Fighting God Armor, but I've never once fought against Badigadi wearing it."

"I see."

It was expected, but my disappointment couldn't be hidden. However, it wouldn't be expressed outwardly.

"Now, please tell me about the Fighting God Armor."

"The Fighting God Armor is the strongest armor created by Laplace. It lied in the depths of the Demon God's Cave at the center of the Ringus Sea. Its surface glows golden when infused with mana and grants the wearer the ultimate power. However, due to its overwhelming mana, it develops self-awareness, gradually taking over the consciousness of the wearer, and makes it difficult for them to judge ally from enemy, seeking only battle. Although Badigadi does not seem to have been completely taken over, it may be happening slowly. However, Badigadi is a unique individual with a special body that the demon eyes cannot see. Perhaps, it's possible he managed to avoid being taken over by the Fighting God Armor."

So, Badigadi hasn't worn it for a very long time. Still, the way it takes over consciousness seems familiar... I heard it somewhere before.

"The Fighting God Armor, like your Magic Armor, moves by consuming the mana of the wearer. Unlike yours, the wearer cannot take it off until their life force is completely exhausted. If Badigadi is wearing it, it will likely function perpetually. The moment the armor is worn, it transforms into the

optimal form for the wearer. During that transformation, the most suitable weapon is also created. The range depends on the weapon, but if Badigadi is using it, it's unlikely to be a long-range weapon. Magic is nearly neutralized by the golden light emitted from the surface... but there is a threshold. Your Stone Cannon fired at full power might, or might not, be effective."

Detailed. He's unusually chatty. But, oh well... So... The Stone Cannon was more effective than a lightning attack. I didn't know, so it ended in failure.

"When you fought against it before, who was wearing it?"

"A certain seafolk. Although they quickly died due to running out of mana."

"Any other cases?"

"I've worn it myself a few times, it was worn by a human once, and by a demon once."

So, he's had several experiences with the equipment, then. Well, if you don't use it several times yourself, you won't know the details.

"So, specifically, how can it be defeated?"

"...I don't know."

"You don't know?"

"When someone wears the Fighting God Armor, they don't feel tired or in pain and on top of that they can fight at their peak at all times. However, it's just forcing movement, and it doesn't have the function to heal the wearer's injuries. Therefore, if attacks can land, initiating a war of attrition would be effective, but..."

That might be impossible with Badigadi.

The Fighting God Armor keeps moving until the wearer dies. Badigadi is immortal. In other words, a perpetual motion machine.

"How did Laplace defeat it?"

"He struck it with high-output magic attack, exceeding the defense threshold of the Fighting God Armor, causing its contents to temporarily disappear and separate. As a result, a large hole opened up on the continent, creating the Ringus Sea."

"I see."

If the attack power is sufficient, causing damage is possible. But then it would just recover afterward. Still, there was one strategy...

"However, I heard that the wearer at that time died... So, it was Badigadi?"

"You didn't know?"

"People say Laplace apparently didn't know who wore it in the battle at that time. After hearing that the user died, I didn't have any further interest. Since I never thought that the Fighting God would stand in front of me as an enemy like this before."

"Did you... ask Laplace himself during the past loops?"[44]

"That's right. I also learned from him that I am the son of the first Dragon God and that the first Dragon God applied this curse on me."

"...But Laplace has to be killed, right?"

"Yes. To reach the location where the Man-God is, all five Dragon Kings must be killed, and the secret treasures must be extracted from them."

"....."

It feels like I've heard clearly for the first time that they must be killed. I see, so it's true after all. Then, I can't expect reinforcements from Perugius either. I also wouldn't want to help someone who has the intention to kill me later on. It's pointless to discuss this now.

"It must be an unpleasant story for you."

"...No."

Now, let's focus on what's in front of me.

First, Badigadi.

If the Man-God is also acting while foreseeing his own future, he probably couldn't use pawns that move selfishly easily, like Badigadi. Or perhaps, this might be the true trump card that the Man-God possesses. When I saw him the other day for the first time in a while, he seemed to be in quite a desperate situation.

Fighting God Badigadi. Originally, Badigadi was an apostle of the Man-God. I don't know why the Man-God didn't use Badi in the previous loops, but

[44] Rudeus literally asks him if he asked Laplace. Apparently, Orsted fused Laplace again in one of his loops and talked to him. Rifujin said this on a Twitter Post.

let's see it as, this time, I was able to bring him out. Well, if he didn’t come up in any of the previous loops, it's probably because of me.

"So, what's your plan?"

"I will fight. There's no escape."

"Understood. I'll join the fight. I've never fought him before, but I shouldn't be unable to win."

Saying that, Orsted stood up. However, I interrupted him.

"No, please wait."

Orsted sat back down. His face was not visible due to the mask, but I could sense a disgruntled expression.

"Depleting your mana here would ultimately result in defeat, Lord Orsted. It serves no purpose."

"If you die here, it would also be a loss. It serves no purpose."

"Well, that's true, but..."

Should we take a chance now or wait for later. But I've come this far. I want to endure until the point where I truly believe it's hopeless.

"However, even if Lord Orsted has to fight, at least we should weaken the power of the Fighting God before that."

"...You'll die."

"If that happens, please take care of my remaining family members."

I don't want to die; I want to return alive. But surely, this was definitely a “life or death” situation. The Fighting God is the last resort of Geese and the Man-God. Maybe they still have a card to play in this situation. The Dark King Vita, the Sword God, the North God, and the Ogre God have all been defeated. This Apostle is the last piece. All his face-down cards are now in the open. If we defeat the Fighting God here, they should be in considerable trouble. We have to endure, fight, and win here.

"Understood. But if you find out that you can't win, retreat immediately. Understood?"

"Thank you."

I bowed and stood up.

A Day at the Office
Redundancy Volume 2 - Chapter 4

★Orsted★

With that in mind, I'll continue writing down information today as well.

First, there's the information that came from the communication tablet during midnight. Thanks to this communication tablet, information gathering has become much easier. In previous loops, if there was any change, I had to go to the site and gather information to know the results.

I've gotten used to it, but for someone like me with a curse, it's still quite a difficult task. But now, I can just sit here and get enough information. There's a huge difference compared to the times when I had to go through many loops to know the result of a single change.

Of course, such an extensive information network wouldn't have been necessary if Rudeus didn't exist.

I wouldn't have been able to change so much on my own. He changed so much that I'm even hesitant about what to do next.

Even dealing with the automata named Anne that he made is troublesome.

I've seen the doll named Anne, but I never thought something like that could be made by human hands.

Perugius was surprised too. He said it's closer to humans than his spirits.

Probably, that's the existence Kháos, the Mad Dragon King, dreamt of.

Kháos is already dead and no longer in this world, but if he were alive, would he have made dolls with them...? If there's a next loop, I guess I'll postpone retrieving the treasure from Kháos.

Translation Notes and Explanations

Man-God – Human God – God of the Humans

7 Seas used “The God of Men” instead of “The Human God”.

As has already been made clear, Future Rudeus explains in Volume 14 that he is known by the following names:

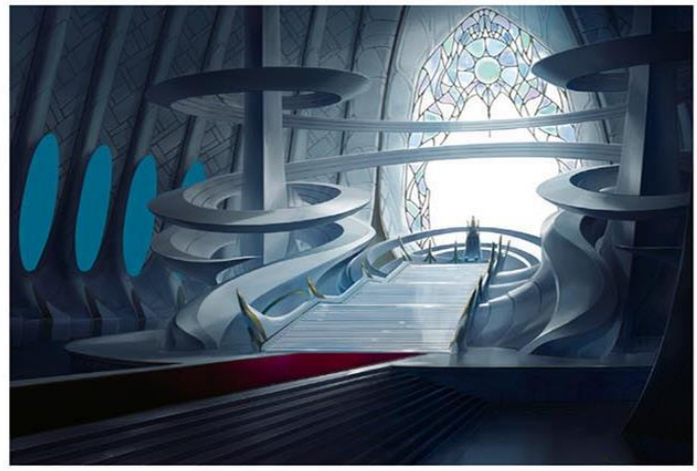
“God of the Humans” (人の神 = Hito no Kami)
Or alternatively, “Human God” (人神 = ジンシン = Jinshin)

And that only those who have met him directly know the name “Man-God” or (ヒトガミ = Hitogami).

Kháos – Chaos – Chaos Breaker

- カオス (Kaosu or Kaos) – This is the pronunciation of the Greek name “Kháos” (χάος).
- ケイオース (Keioosu or Keios) – This is the pronunciation of the English word “Chaos.”
- ケイオースブレイカー (Keioosu Bureikaa) – This translates to “Chaos Breaker.”

From the Official Art Book from the anime:



Dragon Roar – Dragonroad

The name of the mountain where Laplace and Rostelina are located in this story is “龍鳴山” (Ryumei-Yama) or “Dragon Roar Mountain.” However, this “Dragon Roar” when converted into Katakana COULD (big could) be rendered as ドラゴンロード (Do Ra Go N Roo Do), which, under most publishers—who translate without understanding the context of this story—would end up being translated as “Dragon Road” ...

Yes, just like Elinalise Dragonroad.

A similar issue arises with the Dragon King Kingdom. As we saw in the Q&A section with Rifujin, there was some confusion regarding whether it should be “King Dragon Kingdom” or “King Dragon King” since the story of the Subjugation of the King of Dragon Kings was written before Old Dragon’s Tale, and at that time, King Dragon was not yet used in English.

Its name is "キングドラゴン" (Ki N Gu Do Ra Go N) = King Dragon

However, the name of the kingdom is written in Kanji:

王竜王国 (Ō ryū ōkoku) = Dragon King Realm

Which led to Rifujin using “Gold Dragon” (ゴールドドラゴン) in this story instead of “King Dragon” to avoid more confusion with new readers.

That’s how the final result came about. Other possible translations for the Kanji “鳴” could have been “Cry of the Dragon,” “Song of the Dragon,” or even “Bark of the Dragon,” “Sound of the Dragon,” or “Echo of the Dragon.” That said, we will have to wait for the official publication of this story’s Light Novel to confirm whether they include furigana (annotations above words to clarify pronunciation) marking “Dragon Road” above the Kanji. That would give us a stronger confirmation.

With that in mind, it is also possible that the labyrinth where Elinalise was found was on the “road” to Dragon Roar Mountain and hence, she got stuck with the name “Dragon Road”.

Names of the Dragonfolk

The theme of the Dragonfolk is centered around famous scientists or scientific theories and discoveries.

Pierre-Simon Laplace

He was a French mathematician, physicist, and astronomer who made major contributions to celestial mechanics, probability theory, and statistics. He proposed *Laplace's Demon*, a thought experiment suggesting that if a hypothetical intelligence knew the exact position and momentum of every particle in the universe, it could predict the future and reconstruct the past with perfect accuracy, reinforcing the idea of a deterministic universe. His work laid the foundation for modern physics, engineering, and astronomy, though later developments in quantum mechanics challenged his strict determinism.

Hans Christian Ørsted

He was a Danish physicist and chemist best known for discovering the relationship between electricity and magnetism in 1820. His experiment, where he observed that a compass needle was deflected by an electric current, was a crucial breakthrough that led to the development of electromagnetism—a fundamental principle in physics. Ørsted's discovery paved the way for later advancements by scientists like André-Marie Ampère and James Clerk Maxwell, ultimately leading to technologies such as electric motors and generators, which are essential to modern life.

Crystal - Crystallography

Crystallography studies how atoms are arranged in solids and is crucial in physics, chemistry and biology. X-ray crystallography (developed by William Henry Bragg & William Lawrence Bragg) led to the discovery of DNA's structure, while electron crystallography analyzes materials at the atomic level, advancing science and technology.

Leó Szilard

A Hungarian-American physicist who was instrumental in researching nuclear chain reactions and played a key role in the Manhattan Project.

James Clerk Maxwell

A Scottish physicist who formulated Maxwell's equations, which describe electromagnetism. The Maxwell-Boltzmann distribution describes how particles move in gases, which relates to nonlinear dynamics, a key concept in chaos theory.

Kháos

Possibly a reference to chaos theory, a branch of mathematics that studies highly sensitive dynamic systems influenced by initial conditions (popularized by Edward Lorenz).

Dola

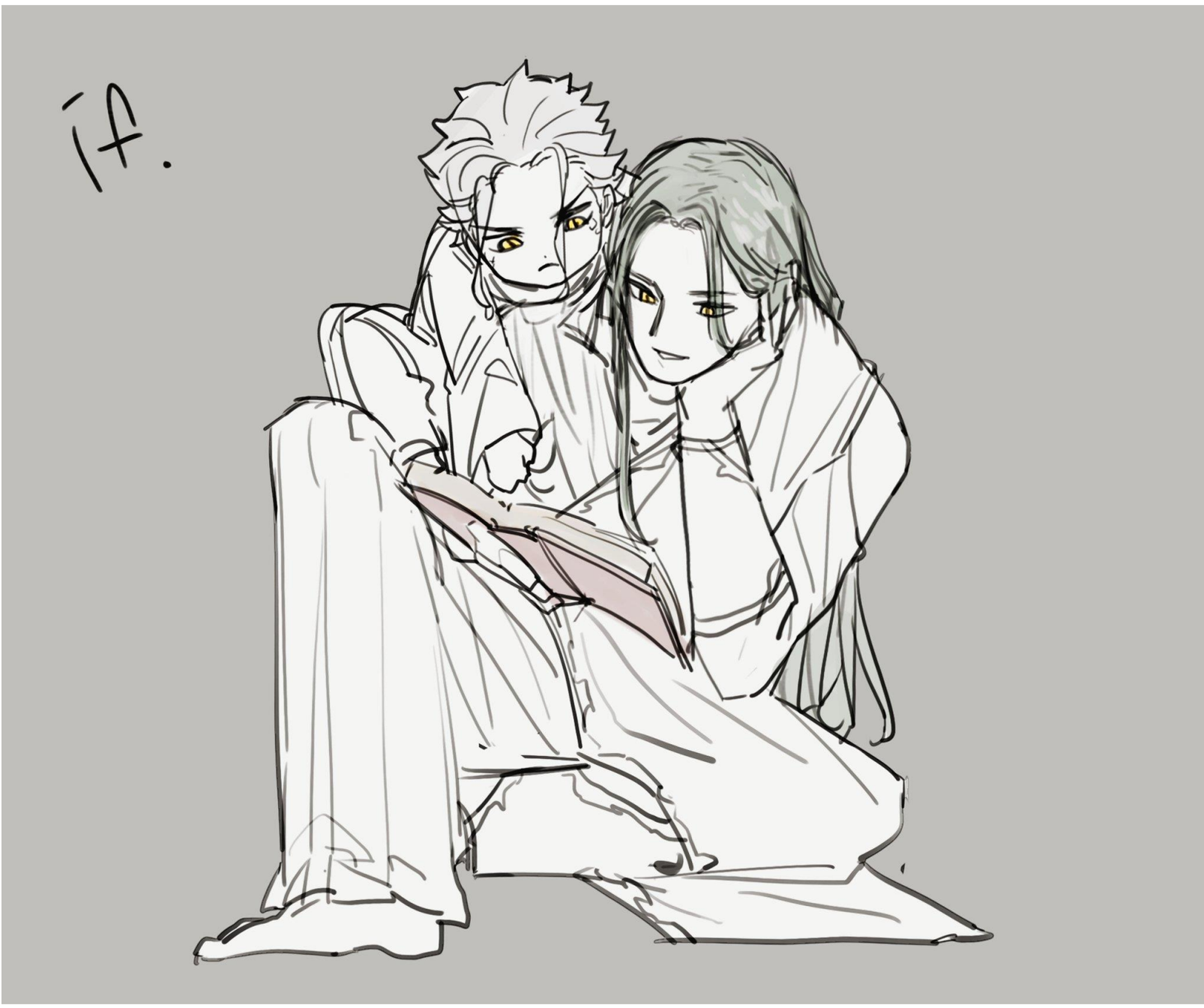
This one is tricky. Her name in Katakana is “Doora” (ドーラ), but for stylistic reasons and based on public votes, I left it as “Dola.” Otherwise, we would have to deal with the name “Perugius Dora.” That said, many famous female scientists were named Dora, but I assume it refers to:

Dora Goldstein

An American pharmacologist and professor, Dora Goldstein was known for her research on the effects of ethanol on the body and the biochemistry of addiction and alcohol withdrawal. She served as a tenured professor at Stanford University.

That’s all.

–If–



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